

# THE COMPLETE PREACHER.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK, AUGUST, 1877.

No. 5.

## Thy Kingdom Come.

### A SERMON

PREACHED BY HENRY C. POTTER, D.D., IN GRACE CHURCH, NEW YORK.

*Thy Kingdom come.*—Matt. vi: 10.

So we pray, if we pray at all, every night and morning of our lives. So men have been praying for all but twenty centuries, and if they are right who trace the substance of the Lord's Prayer to some ancient Jewish liturgy, then for some twenty or thirty centuries back of that.

And, on the whole, not altogether in vain. It is true that when we look at individuals we are often more or less doubtful. If our neighbor is virtuous we are apt to think that it is because he has never been greatly tempted, and, though he may think that the religion of Jesus Christ has done a great deal for him, we are apt to set down his most characteristic excellencies to his inherited temperament. He is able to control his anger because he has a sluggish circulation. He is liberal in his views because matters concerning which other people quarrel are matters concerning which he does not really care. If he does not sin with his tongue it is because he is naturally of a reticent disposition. Christianity may indeed have kindled in him new and loftier aspirations, but concerning this we have no means of knowing. So far as we can judge, people very often do not greatly differ whether they profess much, or little, or nothing. This, I imagine, is a very common sentiment, though it may not find common expression. But when we group individuals together, then, if we are equally candid, we are brought to quite a different conclusion. Looking at human society as a whole, and especially at so much of it as is included in the term Christendom, we cannot help acknowledging that some silent agency is at work in the world, the larger tendency of which is to lift men up. Life in our day is attuned to nobler issues than in the ages which have preceded it. It is indeed quite possible to find in heathendom solitary instances of a virtue as lofty as much that is the outcome of Christianity. But, on the whole, paganism moves upon an infinitely lower plane, and leaves its disciples

precisely where it found them. Christianity, on the contrary, though it is a tide with many an ebb, is obviously a rising tide, and that humanity which, like some richly freighted ship, it bears upon its bosom, is being steadily if slowly lifted into the region of a purer atmosphere and a more enduring sunshine.

And yet one cannot help the frequent thought, How slow this progress is! When we pray "Thy Kingdom come," if we mean what Christ meant when He taught His disciples so to pray, then our meaning is that it may come here and now. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is done in heaven." Whatever we may choose to mean by heaven, and howsoever we may picture to ourselves a life outside these present conditions, this plainly is the will of God, that His kingdom is to find its realization on this earth of ours, and amid these scenes, or others not unlike them.

And this naturally starts the inquiry, When and by what means is it to come? "Obviously," I hear it answered, "when God wills, and by means of our praying for it." And in one way such an answer is true enough. But the moment we look at the evils in this world which must be gotten out of the way before the kingdom of God is to come, two things, which are in substance one, become quite plain to us. God has so ordered things here that progress never comes without the co-operation of those whom it is designed to benefit. He Himself has chosen to condition what he wills upon what we will. He will not indeed let the obstinacy of human nature wholly balk His high designs; but, on the whole, He has chosen that the consent and activity of human beings shall be in all His plans an essential factor. And, therefore, when He bids us pray "Thy Kingdom come," He bids us work for that for which we pray. Prayer, instead of being a substitute for effort or a mere supplement to it, is seen to be a kind of natural breath of effort. And the man whose natural energies are most simply aroused in pursuit of any object will be the man to pray most earnestly. Some of you will remember that during a pestilence in Great Britain some years ago, a petition was addressed to the crown, asking that a form of prayer be set forth in view of the special emergency. To this petition Lord Palmerston, who was then Prime Minister, responded that it would be time enough to issue new forms of prayer when the people of the great cities in which the pestilence was raging were seen to be enough in earnest in the matter of staying it to clean their streets and flush their sewers, and improve the condition of their tenement houses. There was a common outcry of indignation from all classes of religious people at an answer so profane. And yet, though somewhat open to criticism in form, the answer was right in



point of fact. It is an impertinence to besiege the gates of heaven for results, the means to accomplish which are largely in our own hands. There is a sense in which working is praying, just because working is the most genuine, the most eloquent, and the most expressive means of letting God know what that is for which our hearts are longing. Doubtless it is true that no sigh breathed by any solitary sufferer from the helplessness of a sick bed, and of which the burden is, "Thy Kingdom come," is ever breathed in vain. Doubtless it is true that when any discouraged soul, falling upon his knees at the end of a day through which he has been all but vainly struggling with the waywardness, the obstinacy and the depravity of human nature, cries aloud, "O God, accomplish Thine own work and so bring in Thy Kingdom"—doubtless it is true that God hears and answers such a prayer. But no less is it true, when God sees any one of us striving in any lowliest way to smooth the way for His coming and to make the world more meet for Him who is one day to rule in it and over it, that that is another way for praying "Thy Kingdom come"; perhaps more potent and persuasive with our Maker than the other.

But here at once the question arises, if working on our own part is such a considerable element in hastening the kingdom that is coming, what is it to be the nature of the work? What are the forces that are to be called into action, and how and by whom are they to be used?

There is no doubt that during the past two hundred years a great change has been wrought in the mind of Christendom on this point, so that the attitude of Christian sentiment in the nineteenth century may be said to be returning to that of the first century. And this itself is one of the most hopeful tokens of a brighter era. For some ten or twelve or even fifteen centuries it was held that the church, as an organized force was to be the instrument of answering the Saviour's prayer, and that the agency which it was to use was largely or mainly by the agency of force. We remember how when Vladimir, an Emperor or Czar of Russia, became a Christian, he sent out the priests of the new religion in company with his battalions, and offered to his subjects the single alternative of being baptized or being beheaded. "By this happy means," to use his own grim expression, he was able to report to the Patriarch of Constantinople that his whole people had become cordial converts to Christianity. And though Rome has sneered at her older and oriental sister, the Church of the West has even a less fragrant record in this particular than the Church of the East. St. Augustine did not scruple to call in the imperial arms to suppress a heresy. Gregory VII. claimed the monarchy of the world, and exercised the powers

of a monarchy in crushing those who obstructed the progress of the church. Pope Gregory XIII ordered a *Te Deum* to be sung at Rome on receiving the tidings of the massacre of St. Bartholomew; and popes and cardinals, bishops and priests, laymen and laywomen hailed the cruelties of the Inquisition with equal eagerness and delight. Nay, we need not go back so far for illustrations of this position. English churchmen, maimed and persecuted English Puritans; American Puritans imprisoned and exiled American Quakers and Baptists; and in our own land, even in our own century, statutes were still existing which fined people for neglecting public worship, and which, just so far, aimed to hasten the Master's better and brighter kingdom by force and coercion and penalty.

Let us thank God that if we have gotten no further, we have advanced far enough to see the folly of seeking to win the world to Christ by force. Let us thank God that though there still exists, as perhaps the most conspicuous feature in Christendom, that venerable and wonderful organization which has its centre at the Vatican—the world has forever outgrown and cast behind it that for which the Church of Rome stands. "The whole weight of facts, the whole weight of truth, is soberly but irresistibly against its claim. This is a point on which Christianity and civilization," as an observer of singular sagacity has remarked, "though looking suspiciously at each other at times, entirely join hands. They speak one language; they abjure with one mouth force as the property of the church, and force as applicable to religion at all. The earth must roll back on its axis before the moral sense of society recants on these questions; nay, the more the world advances, and the better civil government becomes, the more clear will be the distinction between the scope of civil government and the scope of the church. . . . Civil justice and the rights of conscience belong so much to the morality of society now, that they must falsify any moral creed opposed to them." And so, though I fear there are still some people who would like to make others religious by law, and who sigh for the good old days when witches were burned and infidels branded, we may at least rejoice that we have turned the last page in the bloody and brutal history of force as an instrument for hastening the coming of the kingdom of love and the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Are we any clearer than were those of old, however, as to the agencies by which such a result is to be accomplished? When we pray, whether here or elsewhere, "Thy Kingdom come," have we come to see what is wanted to hasten it? There are those who, in answering that question, will tell us that what is wanted is a deepening of the devotional life, a more constant habit of prayer and of meditation, and a greater



fervor and disengagedness in the spirit of our devotions. And in all this, from whatever quarter it may be urged, there is much that deserves our consideration. The soul must get the strength with which it grapples with the graver problems of life by kneeling down and asking for it at the foot of the Cross, or else, sooner or later, that strength will run thin and run out. If any one of us would undertake to make straight in the desert an highway for our God, he will need, like others who have toiled and striven in the desert, to have an angel come and strengthen him. A man who would really turn his prayer, "*Thy Kingdom come,*" into such serviceable action as will help to make it come, may be able to say, as once his Master said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." His deepest life must be fed by fountains that are hid within the vail, and which take their rise hard by the throne of God.

But when this is said, there is another side to the matter which is too easily and too often overlooked. *Thy Kingdom come* we pray; but do we ever pause and ask ourselves precisely what we mean by it? If the Kingdom of the Master is to dawn at last, as most assuredly it will, amid this homely, common life of which your life and mine make up so integral a part, what can be plainer than that, in order to hasten it, it belongs to us to do anything, everything that will make that life clearer, nobler, freer and more loving. O, we are looking to find in some romantic call to distant climes, or to monastic renunciation, or to conspicuous self-sacrifice, the means for hastening the Master's Kingdom, when, in fact, those means are at our very doors in opportunities that invite us every day. In London, as I was lately told, some one has reared a building into which any travel-stained and begrimed wayfarer may turn at will, and at the same time cleanse himself and every garment that he has upon him. While he is finding his way back to decency and self-respect in a refreshing bath, his clothing, by means of some clever mechanism, is cleansed and purged of every stain and soil, and then straightway returned to him again. Have you ever realized, now, the degradation that there is in dirt, and can you not see how some thoughtfulness on the part of others such as this, may be the one link that keeps a man from desperation and the gutter? Some one there is he dimly sees, somewhere, that wants him to be better and decenter than he is; some one who not only shudders to think of his gradually brutalizing himself, but who has reared and flung wide open this practical succor in his sore strait. He may never have heard about God, but this kindness he can understand, and must needs feel the spell of that divine motive of pitying brotherhood that has inspired it. And so, to such a one, something nobler than himself, and yet something akin to himself, something above him, and yet something reaching

down to him, becomes, it may be for the first time, real and near to him.

Of course this is an extreme illustration, and it is for that very reason that I have chosen it. But if there is any force in it at all, think how many other agencies there are that lie within reach of all of us, which, if we will, we may set to work and thereby pray by deed as well as by word, "Thy Kingdom come." How many lives there are barren of hope, aye, and barren too almost of faith as well, because for them the world has been so barren of human sympathy. Theirs are solitary lives—lived apart from homes and from all that that blessed word implies. They are young men, alone in a great city; single women who are earning their own livelihood, and living meantime in lodgings. They are the aged, the infirm, the worn out, who are stranded by this eager rush of life high up on some dismal sand-bank of utter isolation. The advancing tide has thrown them off as so many useless incumbrances, and they are bleaching away the remainder of their days in cheerless solitude; and meantime our homes are bright and warm, and ring with the shouts of children or the rippling laughter of congenial intercourse. Did it ever occur to us that there might be such a thing as a more unselfish use of our homes, and that we might well strive to make them, oftener than we do, a haven of rest and change for those who are wholly without them, or that, if we cannot even do that, we might at least strive to carry something of their sunshine and sweetness to those darker corners and lowlier lives that are pining to-day in loneliness. Any one left utterly to himself cries out in despair, "No; it is all false. There is no God. They say Christ has been in the world, and that He is living still, but I do not believe it. If it were true that He was still here in the life and spirit of His followers, could I be left to lead this dreary life, without one hand outstretched to cheer me"? And then we hear of some dismal tragedy, and straightway throw up our hands in equal horror and dismay. And yet if we had made our Christian personality a more outgoing thing, how different it might have been; for who doubts that there are those to-day who saw in some kindly and generous ministry approaching in their hour of grief, or need, or loneliness, their first ray of hope, and learned from it their first lesson of aspiration? As such a one once said, "I do not know much about Christianity, but if this is what Christianity makes people do, then I believe in Christ and I mean to follow Him." And thus in lives redeemed from despair and sin, from sickness and penury, from shame and hopelessness, the kingdom that is coming wins its victories, and gains another forward step in its secure though slow advance.

A great many of us, it is to be feared, are nursing the hope



that sooner or later we shall get out of this world, and then be done with it forever. We regard its evils as incurable, its graver problems as utterly baffling solution. We read that it is one day to be burned up, and we refuse to see that that burning is to be a burning of refining and purification, and not a burning of destruction. And so our supreme concern comes to be, to finish our term here as decorously and comfortably as possible, and then flee out of this hopeless muddle into a brighter and happier realm beyond. But God has put us here to stay. We are not to run away, but to face the issue and to grapple with it. This is God's world, not the devil's; and one day the King shall come and claim His own. And therefore we are here, not to save ourselves, but to work for Him, and thus working, to hasten on the day of His return.

And so any woman ministering in a hospital or an alms house or an asylum, is praying in a language far more eloquent than any other, "Thy Kingdom come." Any man who is building a decenter house in some crowded city for the day laborer to inhabit, if he is doing it with a manly desire to better the condition of his fellows, is praying "Thy Kingdom come." Any young girl who goes to some home meaner and scantier than her own, and strives to brighten it with her hand and her smile, is praying "Thy Kingdom come." Any young man who is teaching little children, or helping to keep open a free reading-room, or looking after the lonely and the sick, is praying "Thy Kingdom come." Any capitalist who is making labor less a drudgery and service less a slavery, any employer who in dull times is keeping men at work and illustrating thus not only the spirit of charity but the nobler spirit of brotherhood, who is thus showing to others that he has learned the meaning of the Master's Golden Rule—he, too, is praying "Thy Kingdom come."

And so, with often feeble and trembling fingers, working, sometimes side by side with others and sometimes quite alone, working often in doubt and fear and self-distrust, but working always with unfaltering courage and immortal hope—these are they who are unbarring the doors which ages of ignorance and prejudice have reared, but through which one day, an age more golden and more glorious than poet ever sung or prophet ever dreamed, shall burst at last upon us. By toils and labors more expressive far than any words, they lift the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come"! "Even so, Lord Jesus come quickly."

## Special Providences.

PREACHED BY C. H. Fowler, D.D., LL.D. EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK  
"CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE."

*Get to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain : whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life ? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.—James iv : 13-15.*

THE early church encountered about the same difficulties that confront the church of this day. Men noticed the even on-going of things in nature, and said, "These things have continued in regular succession through countless ages. They will continue in the same way, and we do not see that the Lord has anything to do with this. We will arrange our plans and order our steps without any reference to the Infinite." But James comes down to the very core of their objection and difficulty, laying bare their stumbling and blunder, saying, "Ye know not what a day may bring forth. You leave out of account the main element, for know this assuredly, that the Divine will enters as an essential element or factor into the problem of every life. Instead of saying that you will do this or that, as may seem good to you, ye ought rather to say, 'If the Lord will, we will live and do this and that.'"

This brings us to the thought which I wish to present—the fact and order of an especial Providence concerning us and concerning our lives.

I will give you the practical enunciation of this argument concerning special providence, in which, as candidates for immortality, as men and women journeying through a world that is thickly beset with difficulties and pitfalls and snares, and where the very air is thick with hissing missiles, it is quite worth our attention and our thought, if we can, to find somewhere that the Infinite will condescend to take care of us, and watch over us, and see that we are alive and fed and taught and builded up into characters and brought to righteousness and prepared for the city of the saints, prepared for His right hand. It is quite a point of interest to us if we can secure such an alliance.

The first suitable thing to do in such a question as this is to collect the materials out of which we have to construct an opinion concerning Providence. They are abundant on every hand. I need hardly stop to tell you that we are in the midst of great forces that seem to stretch on through the ages, and that handle us apparently as if we were but bubbles on the



sea, that beat us about, carry us backward and forward, wash over us, wipe us out whenever they please; that we are in the midst of these great, far-reaching principles. The days follow each other, and the seasons come on with unquestionable certainty. Generation after generation comes and goes down into the grave only to make room for succeeding generations, and the years move surely on and on. The sun never forgets to shine; the great march of the stars never comes to a halt; nature does not so much as care for us in our living or our dying, so far as we can see. We must recognize this great fact to begin with—that we are handled by mighty laws that stretch throughout nature and run through the centuries.

Perhaps it is worth saying just at this point that this is about the best possible system, even in the field of our narrow vision, into which we could be cast. If there were no great, all-embracing laws, it would not be possible for any intelligence to administer a moral government, or any government, over intelligencies as such. If you did not have some known order to bring out the fact that the harvest was in the seed, you would not scatter the seed. If you were not in the midst of laws and of order, your forethought, your intelligence, your calculation, your plan, would be useless; and there could be no government over you.

Then there is another set of facts which we must take into this calculation. We stumble upon events that come to us as surprises. We never thought of their coming to us. Coffins glide into our homes on the brightest days of all the year, and shadow them forever. We did not know they were coming; we had no opportunity to barricade our doors against them; we had no knowledge by which we could detect their approach; and so we are in the midst of a great multitude of events that seem to be rained upon us helter-skelter. They come when they please, and without any perception or consent of ours.

Then this additional fact enters into this problem: Nature seems to treat us as if she had to watch us and yet was thoughtful concerning us. She allows us to know a great many things which we cannot help, and she puts the things that we might help out of our knowledge. I can calculate for you the position of the sun in a million ages from to-day. I can tell you every transit and the tick of the watch when it will appear. It is a simple matter of mathematics; but after you have found the fact you can do nothing about it; you cannot help yourself. A great multitude of events are occurring that are within the reach of our power, at whose approach, could we only be warned of them, we would step forth and take them by the throat and choke them out of existence; but they leap in upon us, and we are beneath their feet; we are trampled, con-

quered, before we are aware of their presence ; so that where our power may act, Nature sees to it that we have no knowledge. And thus we are treated in a sort of compound, complex system. Nature is looking upon us as if she cared for us, and yet is treating us as if she were afraid of us.

Now, all these varieties of circumstances sum up into what you may remember along the old lines and by an old classification that is as good as it is old. They reduce to four simple classes. I think they are brought out as clearly by McCosh as by anybody. I only follow his classification : First. This man sees in nature only mishaps and accidents and derangements and sorrow and disappointment and desertion and defeat, and he goes along the way of life mad ; he is angry at everything ; he sees no future ; he is certain only of the present, and often in great doubt about that. That man is an atheist. His view finds no God, no hope, no personality. Here is another man who finds God in everything—in the cloud, in the storm, in the flowers, in the mountain torrent—everywhere. He is back of everything, behind all causes, and under all forces, and in all power ; but he has no personality ; he does not come out into actual manifestation ; there is no individual volition ; there is no ordering by a direct purpose ; it is a sort of steady on-moving of a kind of animated principle. That man is a pantheist. Then here is another man who sees God in the lightning that kills the widow's cow and burns the poor man's barn, and he sees the Almighty in Vesuvius and in the breath of the pestilence and the roar of the tornado ; he sees the angry glance of the Infinite in the leaping lightning ; but he sees Him nowhere else. That man is a superstitious man. There is another man over yonder who sees the Almighty in everything—in the violet as well as in the mountain crag ; in the song of the meadow lark as well as in the roar of the tempest ; in the blessed dew that comes upon us with its baptisms of life as well as in the lightning flash that dazzles the eye ; in the health of the peoples as well as in the blast of the plague. He seems to be aware of the Divine presence in all things—moving steadily with reference to our interests, caring for us, training us, schooling us, handling us as if we were indeed going to another country, and were being qualified and fitted in this land for a future and far better abode. That man is a Christian.

Now, I think all the views are summed up in these that I have put forward. They are distinct, they are worth retaining. The atheist shuts up his eyes tight and says, There is no light, there is no sun. The pantheist opens his eyes just a little ; he catches a glimmer of light, and he says, There is light, but there is no sun. The superstitious man opens his eyes widely and shuts them tightly. He sees by fits and starts. The



Christian man opens his eyes widely and keeps them open all the time, and he sees the light and the sun. As another has said, the atheist walks out into nature as into a great wilderness, and he stumbles and staggers along, catching his feet among the interwoven vines, knocking them against the rocks, with no light for his path, and no hope for his heart, and no expectation for his future. The pantheist goes out into nature as into a great temple wonderfully wrought with strange carvings, illumined by the most magnificent chandeliers, carpeted with the most delicate and fanciful fabrics, decorated with the masterpieces of the greatest artists, yet saying in the midst of this design, "There is no architect, there is no builder, there is no owner, there is no occupant." The superstitious man goes out into nature as into a great fortress too vast for the forces of the commandant. The walls are broken down in remote places, the gates are torn away, and the enemy can come in at his own pleasure and occupy remote parts of this vast fort. Just about the citadel lives the king with his body-guard, and now and then he dashes out along the embankment on one side and drives out the enemy, and then along the other side and puts them to flight; but he is kept in the citadel as his only secure retreat, except when he rides forth to battle. The Christian man goes out into nature as into a great garden, every inch of which is tilled; into a great castle, the shining keys of which hang at the belt of the commandant; into a great home, where God and His children dwell.

Now, I take that to be a fair putting of the case. The distinctions are sufficiently clear, and yet, for practical use, they are reducible to the man who sees God nowhere and to the Christian who sees Him everywhere.

I do not want to talk very much about the laws of nature. I have positively seen young men strut about in their conceit, button themselves up in their sin, and talk about the laws of nature when, to save their immortal souls, they could not tell what they meant by a law of nature. Indeed, I have heard them talk about the laws of nature as reasons for not serving God even before they were able to grow a moustache, when they were in the softest sort of veal; yet they would assume a tremendous amount of knowledge, and descant about the mighty laws of nature as if that ended everything.

I have no objection to you talking about the laws of nature, if you will only find out exactly what you mean. Then it is safe enough. And if you will give me about a minute on that line, I will tell you what I mean.

We find a certain succession of steps, a certain succession in the order of things; for instance, the sun rose yesterday morning, and the day before, and so on back to Adam, and, for aught I know, a million of ages before; and we say it is a law

of nature that the sun should rise. Now, that does not mean anything, or rather, if it does, it does not apply to your case. It is simply a name for a succession. The question of what may cause the succession is not touched. That is clear, is it not? That is a fair use of the term, only do not apply it where it will not apply. There is another use of it—and that is the best use, and perhaps the one that men use who think most along that line—that comes most nearly to a causal relation—that is, as it comes most nearly to causing things to come to pass. A combination of elements produces certain results. Take the simplest possible case. You put a given amount of oxygen and hydrogen together, and you have a resultant—water; that is, where you combine them chemically. Now, then, they say that this is a law of nature and it approaches productive power; but, mark you—and this is the simple, open, everlasting fallacy of all this argument—it is a combination of two elements. It is not one. You leave either element by itself and it will stay alone forever. It will be oxygen or it will be hydrogen forever and ever, and by no conceivable possibility of thought can it ever produce anything; but when you combine it with another element, then it has a producing power. But who is going to do this combining? That is the question. And so you come back, after all, to the great Combiner, and that is all we want. You see that in the simplest possible adjustment of what you may understand as the laws of nature, we come back, after all, to the great Law-Giver, the great Combiner. Men go back along this line, looking for the Supreme Law, and I rather like the process. I enjoy feeling that I am in the hands of the great laws of nature, and I like to stop in thought up in mid-heavens, and pull away at Gravity, and see that it holds on both sides. I should hate to find myself, even in thought, anywhere where I was outside of law. I know when I am in reach of law that I am in the government of the great Father, and I feel comforted by it; and there is a fascination to my thought in getting hold of a power or a law that applies to this little atom that floats in the air unperceived, as well as to yonder sun that blazes in the heavens. But when we go back to the department of one's heart, there is not much comfort in it. It is cold. It does not satisfy me. I starve on shadows. I am only mocked by echoes. There is no peace in it. That poor widow walks up and down the beach looking for the body of her husband, that went overboard yonder in the storm, and she wrings her hands and calls for help, and waits for the waves to wash up the helpless body at her feet. It is no comfort to her to tell her that it is a great law of nature that ships should go to pieces on the rocks, and that men should lose their lives when they stay under the water. There is no consolation in such a truism.



Now, my point is this: That as an argument it does not meet the case, for you have no more right to starve my heart than you have to starve my head. Logic that leaves me unfed only tramples, mocks, starves me; and I will stand before the common judgment of the race and hold up this my need, and impeach your theory; and if your theory be true, I will humbly yet bravely impeach the Ruler of the Universe, for I am full of wants, and my poor heart cries out to God, and He must hear me, He must feed me. To satisfy this heart of mine I must feel that back of this law is, in the first place, intelligence; that back of it is the hand of a great, infinite, loving Father; then I can look into the open coffin; then I can face the sorrow of the future, and know that in the day after to-morrow we will wipe out the darkness and find that the things that are seen—the disappointments, the trials—are temporal; but that above all and beyond all is the great Father, and that the things that are not seen are eternal.

Some men go back along this line of life, talking about what they can get out of Nature, and they seem to get a good deal out of her. They go back and find their pedigree. They go back to Noah and to Adam, and they go back to the apes, and back to polliwogs, and back to protoplasm, and then they are stuck. There they are perfectly helpless. They seem to get hold of something, but whence did it come? They stand there and watch these first forms wriggle themselves up into being—wriggle before they exist, for only by that process can they wriggle themselves into existence. Here we are on the border of this boundless gulf. I am here, and so are you, and I defy all the thought of the ages to help me over this gulf in any way except by the arm of the Almighty. There has been no approach to it; there has not been even the material collected out of which to construct a pontoon to throw over this chasm. James Martineau, who mingles a vast amount of good metaphysics with some very poor theology, says that these men hang along the borders here and fairly whine for some little start. They seem to say, "Grant us some tiniest granule of power so close upon zero that it is not worth begrudging, give it some infinitesimal tendency to increment, and then we will show you how this factor becomes the cosmos, the all of things." That is, the same atom is treated in one way as if it were nothing, when it is conceded, and then in another way as if it were the sum of all things. Then says Martineau: "Nevertheless, regardless of the countless ages that may be consumed, you require for the production of the universe a power no less than infinite and no lower than Divine"; and he adds, as a sort of left-hander, that strikes back at his antagonist, "It is a mean thing for a philosopher to crib causation with hairs'-breadths, put it out at compound interest through

all time, and then deny the debt"; for that is what it reduces to.

So I say, we come to the point where we are brought face to face with the only difficult problem in this whole question of God being our Father—that of the existence of a personal will in the universe; and grant that, and we have gotten all we want as regards Providence, and you are compelled to grant it.

It has some practical applications that are worthy of attention. One man says in reference to this will: "Why this idea that the Almighty is going to come down and look after me and care for me, when there is such a great multitude, is preposterous! Why you can run over 500 men in this city, and nobody will care much about it except their immediate friends. One man is such a trifle in the midst of these throngs, it is absurd to expect that the Almighty will look after him individually." I have this conviction, that if there is a Being who is infinite, and if He does sit on the throne of the Universe, He is by that very fact going to watch over and care for me.

There is a statesman that goes up from this great city of yours to the Congress of the United States, and he proposes a law which is of general application. It will apply to the interests of Maine and California, of South Carolina, of Louisiana and of Massachusetts, not to say anything about the great Empire State, that always takes what is left. Men say of him, "He is a great statesman. He has great wisdom." But another man arises at his side who ordains another law that is not only applicable to all these great States, with their marvelous resources and their multitudinous interests, but is also applicable to every county in every State; and more than that, it will go down to the wants of every family in every county; and more than that, it will meet the wants of every individual in every family, in every county, in every State; and here the two men stand. Which is the greater? You cannot fail instantly to give the right answer. Now, if the Lord be infinite, that is, if He measures all possible power, He must come down to my needs and look after me as a condition of His being infinite.

But there is a man up yonder in the gallery who says, "Do you suppose the Lord is going to help you or anybody else in particular? that he is going to interfere with the laws of nature because, forsooth, they conflict with your individual interests?" Why, there is a good man walking yonder, and over his path trembles an old dead tree almost in the act of falling. Says this skeptic, "Tell me, do you think the Lord will step forth, stretch out His hand, place it under that old tree, and hold it up because the good man happens to be strolling along on that dangerous road? What we want is



*some movement of Providence* which shall take care of that good man under those circumstances. First, remember that there are a great many good men in the world who have no definite lien on any future usefulness, and that, so far as their brethren can see, it would be a very great comfort to them and their friends if they were well in heaven. So we must assume that the man is still of value. Now, if he is still of value, and the Lord wants him here, He will take care of him in just that emergency. There he goes, and there the tree is falling. He knows nothing, sees nothing of the danger. He is thinking about some of those good old Psalms, bracing up his heart against the manifold evils of this world, when suddenly a tiny cricket right by his path chirps out, and it is such a strange, new sound interrupting his meditations, that he stops and looks a moment, then goes on. The tree falls, but he is not under it, and he is just as much saved by the providence of God as he would have been if the Lord had come out and rolled up His sleeve and held the tree up before the eyes of men.

I have a friend, a good class-leader in the church to which I belong, who was down at Petersburg during the war. He was several times promoted for courage on the field, and a braver man I think I never saw. He said to me: "One day I sat back of the intrenchments at some little distance with my back against a tree preparing to eat my lunch, when I was suddenly seized with an almost resistless desire to get down behind the breastworks; and without waiting a second, without stopping for a second thought, I leaped down, and 'zip!' went a bullet into the tree where I sat." Away up in a tree within the rebel works sat a sharpshooter, who had his eye on him, and God had His eye on the sharpshooter. He was saved just as much as if the Lord had come down and turned aside that gun.

Now, that is a part of my theory about the Lord's taking care of you.

A man said to me, "Why, you don't imagine that since they have attained the point where they can take care of the weather in 78 per cent. of the cases, so that they can tell exactly what kind of weather we are going to have and only miss it about twenty-two times in a hundred—you don't suppose it is worth while to pray about the weather on a 22 per cent. basis?" Now, I say it is of just as much account to pray about the weather as it was when Elijah prayed about it. Here is a storm beating up the coast likely to drive everything to pieces. The Lord touches somewhere else in the universe some other element, gives it a little turn, and the storm veers off. All we need is to get hold of the great Combiner. A

Baptist preacher by the name of Edwards, who had been an old sea-captain, when a tornado was coming straight down upon his house, knew that there was mischief in the cloud. He believed that God was at home in Wisconsin, and calling to his children said: "Do you see that cloud? That means harm. Let us go into the house and tell God about it"; and they went in and prayed to the Lord that He would take care of them if they were worth saving. They were saved, and the next day, and for months afterward, you could see the broad track of the tornado that cleaned up every blade of grass, every roof and hamlet, and tree and stick and stump in its path, bearing right down upon this clergyman's house until it came within a quarter of a mile of it, when it made an abrupt turn, went to one side till opposite his house, then it turned back into its old path, and went on. That man got hold of the great Combiner, and the Lord looked after him.

Down yonder is a little fishing port in Massachusetts—and it is a simple application of these truths and a foundation that gives us confidence—from which a ship had gone out on a whaling voyage. It had been gone three years. By and by the glasses discovered her in the offing trying to come in, and a poor woman, whose only son was on that craft, put on her poor best, and went down to meet her boy as he landed from his long voyage. As the twilight thickened a storm sprang up, and they saw just in the dusk of the day the vessel driven upon the rocks, and they all knew that she was being pounded to pieces. The mother went away to her little old cabin, and there all night long she walked up and down and prayed, now and then dropping down on her face in agony in a corner of the room. Just at daylight the door flew open and in leaped her boy, saying, "I knew, mother, that you would pray me ashore." She, too, got hold of the great Combiner. That is what I believe about Providence and about prayer, and the Bible is full of it, from one end to the other.

It is said of Fletcher that, when he was a young man, he secured a commission in the British Navy, a very difficult thing to obtain, and he was elated above measure; but on the morning the ship sailed a servant overturned some hot coffee into his lap, and instead of going to sea he went into the hands of a physician, and was wrathful almost beyond his control. The ship went to sea with another lieutenant, and never came back again; Fletcher was saved to the church and to mankind. God who is our Father, who counts the very hairs of our head, and who suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His notice, looks patiently after us early and late; and I walk up and down the crowded thoroughfares of this hurrying life conscious that I am the son of a King, and that He has all power



in heaven and on earth, and that nothing shall by any means harm me.

John Brown said in a very dark day, "Don't cry about me; I am worth inconceivably more to hang than for any other purpose"; and he had not only the strategic point for the future, but he had the inspiration of the consecrated prophet. So I say of the believer, he puts his hand up into the shadows over his head. He may be confident that in every hour of trial the Infinite will take hold upon him and lead him; and so long as he is worth more to save than he is to slay, he will be saved. You and I have seen this in the order of business about us in every-day life, and I may say that there are fifty men in this house this morning that have had the experience themselves. They have somehow or other lost their footing. The wheel of business has gone round, and they, by some miscalculation or other, or some evil word of some other men, have been loosened from their hold, and they have been left behind. They have taxed their resources, they have reduced their expenses, they have finally exhausted their possessions, and then they have pushed their credit to the very last point to obtain bread. They have gone from one friend to another beseeching them for work—work for themselves, work that shall save the babes, work for the wife, work at all hazards; and it has not come. Then they have stood in the darkness as if the universe itself was poised upon their hearts; but just at the last moment, somehow or other in the gloom, their hands have been guided to the right niche, and they seize hold of the wheel again and go up with it. That is repeated over and over and over again. That is what I believe about Providence. He may press us and load us and beat us and try us, but He will not desert us. I have not seen Him; I do not know where He lives otherwise than in our hearts. I could not tell you much about His features. I cannot give you the measure of His palace. I cannot even count the steps up to His throne. But this I know, that the great Being up above the sun and on beyond the stars—the Infinite One, who is behind all power and back of all causes, who sits alone on His throne—is somehow or other my Father, and when my earthly father and mother cast me off, then He will take me up. That is my comfort. I have His word.

That man over yonder says, "If you will just demonstrate to me that my children shall not want anything, I can go through this world and put my clenched hand into the face of every difficulty in perfect defiance. I am not afraid of man or beast. I can stand absolutely anything myself, but there are my little babes. I cannot think that they shall sleep in dry-goods boxes, or run around in the alley, or be compelled to steal. I cannot bear that."

Now hear me, brother. David, an old man, had gone around the entire circle of human experience—a shepherd, an adventurer, a courtier, a warrior, a king, a prophet. He understood all the turns of society. He had seen life from one end to the other, and from top to bottom, and he says: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken”—that covers your case, but the rest of it is better yet—“nor his seed begging bread.” That is our Father’s word. Let us hold on to it.



## The Golden "A B C."

### A SERMON

By Rev. Rudolph Kögel, D. D., COURT-PREACHER, BERLIN.

[Translated by Rev. Ernst H. Lübker, A.M.]

SELECTION FROM THE 119TH PSALM.

18. *Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*  
 19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.*  
 24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*  
 36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness.*  
 46. *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*  
 52. *I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself.*  
 54. *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*  
 59. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*  
 62. *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.*  
 67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.*  
 89. *Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.*  
 92. *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*  
 96. *I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*  
 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*  
 9. *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

THE 1st, the 9th, and most all of the 119th Psalm treat of the excellency of the Divine Word. This last-named Psalm, from which the selection has just been read, praises in ever new periods, that of which it forms itself a precious part. Consisting of 176 verses, which in Hebrew are arranged alphabetically, it has on that account received in our German Bibles the superscription: "*The Christian's Golden A B C of the praise, love, power and profit of the Word of God.*"

The gospel for this Sunday sends forth the invitation: "Come, for all things are now ready." Again and again new messengers are sent out with the command: "Compel them to come in." Let us study, then, *The Golden A B C of the excellency of the Divine Word.*

We ask:

1. Who teaches it?
2. Who learns it?
3. What avails it?

Lord, our God, blessed are they that hear thy word and keep it! Amen.

I. "*I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me.*" I am a stranger in the earth; Father, where is the way to the Fatherland, to the Fatherhouse? Oh, hide not Thy

commandments from me! Master, where hast thou taken up thine abode? Suffer me not to stand without; take me beneath the shelter and protection of Thy Holy Word! To be a stranger in the world and to its lusts; to feel homesick for the blessed land of promise, this is the susceptible soil in which the Holy Scriptures were originally conceived and in which they must also be interpreted. The Holy Spirit who plants and nurtures these longing desires—*He* teaches the golden A B C of God's Word. Think of Abram's obedient faith when called by God, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Behold him wandering from place to place until he arrives at his family vault; think of him waiting for a city, the builder and maker whereof is God; whilst confessing himself to be a stranger here below, he longs for the promised blessing and sees it far off in the distance. Looking upward to heaven, he says: "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me!" And God answers, as it were, "How can I hide from Abram that which I mean to do with him?" Think, again, of Moses, so highly favored and yet sorely troubled, a stranger in the earth, a wanderer from the Nile to Mount Nebo, but also one who received and communicated God's commandments. The Psalm composed by him (90th) asks for a double blessing. "Teach us to number our days"; and, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants." Think, once more, of David; how many of his troublous days are spent whilst fleeing before Saul, or before his people, or before his own son! Spite of sword and victory and crown he must exclaim: "Hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner." The shepherd's staff and the royal sceptre must serve him as a pilgrim's staff, and his harp resounds with this double strain: "As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth"; and, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." And all the prophets, whether fugitives like Elijah or prisoners like Jeremias, or otherwise suffering from the opposition of a gainsaying and unbelieving people, stirred up and kept awake by the feeling of being only strangers in the earth, they become only the more thoroughly qualified to sing and to speak about the sufferings and glory of the future Messiah. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants the prophets." Yes, beloved, the whole people Israel is not a multitude of adventurers, but a people led and enlightened by God; a people of pilgrims, and as such a prophetic people. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Says Pascal: "Israel is not a people which made the Bible; on the contrary, the Bible is a book by which Israel is made a people." Just so it



is with the men of the new Covenant: Evangelists and Apostles. They are messengers of a King whose kingdom is not of this world. But a twofold conviction cheers and supports them: "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come"; and this: "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." With such a consciousness they become "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of faith."

Whence, then, are the Holy Scriptures derived? *Who teaches their Golden A B C?* Surely not here on earth is their origin to be found—not in a world of discord and doubt, of lust and passion, of sultry confusion or icy apathy. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Holy Scriptures have indeed many individual writers, but really only *one* author. There are so many that testify and behold! How unanimous their testimony! In wonderful unity every link of the chain is put together. Priests and publicans, kings and shepherds, captains and fishermen though they be according to their social standing, they are yet all, according to their spiritual position, children and servants of God. And although St. John's Revelation is thousands of years apart from the first book of the Holy Scriptures, yet there is spread out over all these and the intervening writings *one heaven; one eternity* is looking on; *one kingdom of God* is being formed; *one Christ* appears!

Travelers are either more fickle than is their wont to be at home, because, unoccupied and uncontrolled, they hasten from one impression to another; or they are more collected than at home, because, undisturbed, they can live in their world of thoughts all to themselves. You who have entered our sanctuary to-day as strangers, look once at your traveling literature. Perhaps it contains many insipid books in which there is no strength nor sustenance; or even frivolous ones, which destroy both strength and sustenance. Believe me the Psalms and the Testament are the best literature for travel; they are books for level and mountainous countries; for land and sea; for sunny and for stormy days; for excursions made in solitude or in company. And wherever your home may be on earth, answer, are you inwardly so disposed that, "when it is evening and the day is far spent," like a star the Psalmist's word will lighten your pathway? "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me." Yes, one day testifies to another that our life is only a pilgrimage to eternity. Let our hearts become used to this thought that our true home is not here below! And whenever the earthly tabernacle of one of your brethren is dissolved, and you ride behind the coffin to the churchyard, answer, think

you then of that hour with earnest and believing confidence, when you yourselves shall be enclosed within those narrow boards? Do you then pray, in fear and trembling: "I am a pilgrim and a stranger, and have here no abiding place, but heaven is my fatherland"? Oh, hide not, thou God of the living, hide not Thy commandments, Thy life-giving promises, from me!

The man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Queen Candace, sitting in his chariot, was reading the 53d chapter of Esaias the prophet. Philip ran to him and asked, "Understandest thou what thou readeest?" and the humble reader replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Who teaches the golden A B C of the excellency of God's word? To *God* belongs the interpretation. He who has given it also interprets it—*He the Holy Spirit*, the spirit of Truth and Revelation!

## II. WHO LEARNS THE GOLDEN A B C?

The *hearer*, who is also a *doer* of the word, and who offers up as a *prayer* this *petition*: "*Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" If you ask, How can I understand the Holy Scriptures? Come and see! Come and do not pass by!

What is *unknown* is also *unloved*. Ignorance always *hates*. As soon as a proper knowledge is received, *love* also grows in interest. Whether it be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ speaking to Eli, "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed," or whether it be Jesus Christ Himself who declares, "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day," suffice it to say, if the word proclaimed by angels on Sinai has once firmly taken root, and every one has received the reward of his iniquity, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation made known by the Lord Himself? Oh, come and comprehend with all saints what is the length and the breadth and the depth, and to know the "love of Christ which passeth knowledge," as revealed in the Divine Word: the beginning and glorious consummation of creation. Behold the tree of life and its parts: come and behold, people of God, God's Son in his state of humiliation and exaltation. Come and behold the *wages of sin* before the judgment of God's *justice*, and the *blessing of redemption* through *grace*. Contrast Israel and church, slavish fear and filial reverence; the tendency toward exclusiveness or that of missionary enterprise! Come, and in the description of the human race behold thyself; in Israel's providential guidance behold thine own, and in one of those balances which God holds in His hands, behold thy eternal destiny. "*I remembered thy judgments of old, O*

*Lord, and have either comforted myself, or horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law."*

If you ask again, How can I learn to understand the Holy Scriptures? this will be the answer: GO AND DO! "What is written in the law, how readest thou?" Thus begins the examination of Jesus, and concludes with the practical lesson, "Go and do thou likewise." For God's Word is not a mirror in which you may look on Sunday in order to forget on Monday how your countenance was shaped. No; it is a sword which is to cut off the hand and the foot, and every besetting sin which is an offence and threatens destruction. "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*"

"I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." The Bible knows and speaks of much sinfulness, nevertheless it remains a Holy Book, inasmuch as it does not pretend to palliate evil, nor, like lascivious romances, become a means of seductive influences, but rather intends to warn and threaten and call to repentance. Those instances where men are described as having fallen or apostatized, as portrayed in Holy Writ, because they are persons of your flesh and blood, are not intended to be your ensnarers but your monitors. *Go and do*: this refers not only to *repentance*, but also to *faith*.

Let it be well understood! The Holy Scripture is not merely a *prescription*, but *medicine* itself. It is not a false or imaginary *comfort*, but such a one which enables you to analyze the spiritual condition of all saints; yea, which gives you power to penetrate the very heart of your Lord and God. It is a comfort produced by patience which worketh experience; it is the comfort coming of a hope which maketh not ashamed. It is a comfort which increases like the flame in a storm. "Let, I pray thee, *thy merciful kindness be for my comfort*, according to thy word unto thy servant. *Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*"

In short, any one who acts according to the will of Him who has sent Jesus and the prophets and apostles, will soon learn whether this is the word of God or man. He will learn to comprehend this, whether he be attentive or forgetful, actively or passively engaged, blessed himself or blessing others.

By its fruits we know the tree; so by its divine efficacy we recognize the divine work, as we know by the inward sanctification of man the sanctifying power of the sacred Scriptures. The authenticity of these sacred Scriptures, as a divine revelation, is again and again demonstrated by their effects, which are as indispensable as they are irretrievable, conveying as they do punishment, reproof, comfort and refreshing.

And if, once more, you ask, How can I learn to understand the Holy Scriptures? this will be the answer: "*Fall down and*



*pray* like the Psalmist, who, in the consciousness of standing on holy ground, and in the conviction that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,' exclaims, as if in prayer, '*Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.*'" By this word "*law*" is meant here the entire revelation, including the promises of the Gospel.

As the incarnate Son of God traversed this earth in the form of a servant, just so appear the Holy Scriptures in their human form; everything in them is so *divine* and at once so *human*!

As many on earth as have a heart to believe and to live, and a mouth to pray, so many shall receive an eye also to perceive the excellency of the Divine Word. It is not sufficient to merely turn the leaves of the Scriptures: they must be read; and not only must they be read simply, but read prayerfully. What glorious examples of such prayers, coming directly out of the Scriptures, has Augustus Hermann Franke given us in his preface to the Bible! How did Luther understand it, to take down from every bough of the tree of Holy Writ precious fruit for himself and others? Who among us would not sing and pray that Jesus might open our eyes that we could behold His glorious light?

III. IS IT NECESSARY YET TO ASK, "WHAT AVAILS THIS GOLDEN A B C ABOUT THE EXCELLENCY OF THE DIVINE WORD?"

It avails for *every stage of life*. Children and Bible stories—who would be so rude, so cruel, to separate what God hath joined together? "This book," says Goethe, "deserves to be esteemed as a universal popular library; and the more highly intelligence is developed in the course of centuries, the more certain it is that it will be made use of partly as the *foundation*, partly as the *means* of education—not, indeed, by *would-be wise*, but by *really wise* people!" Thus speaks the poet in whom many among you believe more fully than in a Paul or John. "*Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word.*" Yes, by listening in time to that admonition: "My son, give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways."

Nor will the aged man do less than make this confession: "*I have seen an end of all perfection*"; how states prosper and perish; how empires rise and disappear; how covenants are made and broken"; how men come and go; "*but Thy commandment is exceeding broad*"; Thy gospel, ever young and rejuvenating, is and remains a seed of regenerating power to become the children of God; Thy commandment, with its truth and clearness, with its judicial earnestness and fatherly consideration, remains for ever and ever. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Thy words, O King of Truth, shall not pass away!"

The A B C of God's Word avails for *every stage of educa-*

*tion.* It is often said, whosoever learns the A B C, to him is open the whole domain of literature; but many, alas! seem to have learned the A B C of all other works of literature except the study of the Holy Scriptures. Are you a *naturalist*? Stand still and wonder! Whatever layers and crusts and strata may lie one over the other, in the Holy Scriptures there is one soft covering upon which grows the germ of faith! What layers of God's faithfulness, what stars of God's consolation, what laws and forces of morality—surely not a whit less strong and inviolable than those natural laws so highly applauded by you! Are you a *philosopher*? What depths of heavenly wisdom are here opened about God's relation to man, and that of man to man! What testimonies, proofs and peaceful thoughts! What a knowledge of the human heart! Are you a *statesman*? Read what is here written for your imitation: "*Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.*" The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but it is the end of folly. As *business men*, here you may learn the art of book-keeping and arithmetic. "*This I had because I kept Thy precepts. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies and not to covetousness.*" Are you a *soldier*? So was David a military man. Are you a *mechanic*? So was Paul a tent-maker; and yet were both servants and also interpreters of the Divine Word! Ye rulers and governors, read the 107th Psalm; ye subjects and servants, read 1 Peter ii: 18; ye employers, lay to heart James v: 4; ye workingmen, heed well what is written in 1 Timothy vi: 12. All of you read the entire sacred Scriptures, and be not ashamed of a book which was to the Son of God like mother's milk and a delight in youth—a hearth and a home—a credential and dying comfort to Him who was immeasurably more than either Jonah or Solomon!

. The golden A B C avails for every *situation of life*. A wedding like that in Cana has received more than earthly joys and earthly guests through the word of God. And ye, dear families of this congregation, who have received in a sacred hour a Bible in remembrance of your marriage vows, oh, believe, I pray you, in this Bible with its prayers for every morning and evening. Renew your vows according to the word of God. For every Christian burial God's Word affords the true consolation. Thus it was in Bethany. Alas! that there should be found *preachers* even who, by the side of the coffin, conceal or pervert the name and fame of Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life! God's Word gives to Sunday its sunshine. What is the explanation of the third commandment: "We should so fear and love God as not to despise His word and the preaching of His gospel, but deem it holy,

and willingly hear and learn it."\* Every work-day receives strength and animation through God's word: "*Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments, and at midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments.*"

This rising at midnight for the purpose of prayer has been literally done by Melanchthon's father and Melanchthon himself. Alas! among you, how is it? One is kept awake by covetousness, another by grief, a third by social pleasure, a fourth by hard study. How rarely do we find those who till late at night are deeply interested in the Word of God!

What we have just now endeavored to describe concerns the *family*! Upon what is built the church—this family on a large scale? Put the word under a bushel, and it will become dark in the congregation. How different when, as once, on the 25th of July, 1530, the *church*, as at the adoption of the Augsburg Confession, took its motto from our Psalm, and maintained it victoriously: "*I will speak of Thy testimonies also before Kings, and will not be ashamed.*"

What, then, avails the golden A B C of the excellency of God's Word? This: that it resists the apostacy of our days; that it teaches to work out salvation with fear and trembling.

Well will it be for you and for me if our divine service to-day has been to us a *Sunday-school* where each one has learned something, and has resolved to learn still more about the golden A B C of the Divine Word. Amen.

---

\* This is the third commandment according to the arrangement of M. Luther's catechism, which is in use in the Evangelical churches of Prussia. (Translator.)



**Demetrius, the Silversmith.\*****A SERMON**

PREACHED BY **Henry Ward Beecher** IN PLYMOUTH CHURCH, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

I SHALL speak to you, this evening, from the events that are recorded in the 19th Chapter of the book of Acts, beginning with the 23d verse :

"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way."

That way was in Ephesus in Asia Minor.

"For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen."

The shrines of Diana were small medals on which was stamped a rude representation of the temple of Diana, and also the statue of Diana, which was said to have fallen from heaven. That statue and that temple figure in this chapter. The temple certainly was one of the most magnificent that was ever built in that land of magnificent architecture. The length of it was four hundred and twenty-five feet, and it was two hundred and twenty feet in breadth. One hundred and sixty-seven magnificent columns, each sixty feet high, surrounded the temple, so that on every side there was a portico. The temple was stored with treasures innumerable that were the gifts of worshipers—of rich citizens. Among the Greeks it was the habit of rich men to have their statues cut, sometimes in marble, which was a base material, comparatively, sometimes in ivory, and sometimes in gold. These were presented to the State, and as the religion and politics of the country were one and the same, they were deposited in the temple. Therefore, in the course of years, the temple had become an immense treasury or repository of gold. It was also a museum of art. Hence it was justly esteemed by the great body of citizens as a monument in their city which distinguished it from all other cities; and their pride in that regard, if not carried too far, was not in any respect discreditable to them.

If any of us were to see this statue of Diana, we should say that it came not from heaven, but from the other direction, rather; for, in fact, it was a miserable, grotesque thing. It was as black as ebony, and it is reputed to have been made of ebony. It had the head of a woman, and there was a castellated crown thereon, and a nimbus surrounded the head; and the whole was symbolic; but from the shoulders down it had precisely the same form which you see in a picture of mummies—a straight body swathed round and round. If you can imagine a black stick, without any form at the bottom, and with a huge, homely head carved on the top, you have a conception of the statue of Diana, about which such a fuss is about to be made.

\* See note at end of sermon.

I may say, in passing, that throughout the world—and among Christians as well as others—it is a fact difficult to be accounted for, that the shrines which are most universally sought, and are most popular, are not those which represent fineness or beauty of art, but are those which are noted for their extreme homeliness; and to-day, if you go through the Catholic portions of the enlightened countries of Europe, you will find that not the shrines which are the most beautiful to us, but those that are to us the least beautiful, are the ones that are the most sought after. The most popular form of the mother of Christ which exists in the world to-day is as black as a negro, and has probably been worshiped by more persons than any other that ever existed. For some reason that I have never analyzed nor been able to understand, throughout the world the thing that is homely and mysterious gets a stronger hold upon the imagination of men than the thing that is beautiful and has no mystery about it. And this statue of Diana, that was represented to have fallen from heaven, and that was thought to make the city favored beyond others, was a thing that to us would be grotesque and hideous; but about it had been wound all the charms which the imagination could suggest to this imaginative people. Of that, more by and by.

“A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana [that is, made little medals having on them a stamp of the temple and of this statue standing in front of it], brought no small gain unto the craftsmen, whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said [laying, now, the foundation of his discourse neither in their moral sensor in their reason, but in that part of their mind where they were most susceptible, and where he would be sure to get a lodgement], *Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.*”

There a good point was made. Not a man of them whose attention was called to that would waver for a moment. Though they might disagree elsewhere, here they were at one. This man, whose name was Demetrius, was a model demagogue. He was fit to have been a politician!

Now, having thus laid the foundation of his discourse, he proceeds as follows:

“Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands.”

How tender his conscience was! How profoundly he felt the desecration of religion!

This man, who made silver shrines, and made great gains thereby, talking to an audience of craftsmen, made them believe that the temple of Diana was in danger of being overthrown, and that their business was in peril; as, in such an event, nobody would buy their medals, their charms; and the result was that they were alarmed, and the blame was put upon

this miscreant Paul. Demetrius, appealing again—of course, incidentally—to the excited element in them, says:

“So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth.”

Good man! You see how he just sank his own interest. He alludes to it; but then, he overflows with a sense of the glory of the temple and of the goddess. And I suppose, when you come right to the root of the matter, that if you could have talked to that man you would have found that he thought himself to be a very just and upright citizen, and a man of true piety. He would disown that self-interest was at the bottom of his action; but the real efficient motive that was moving him, we see in him, though perhaps we may not see in ourselves the motives that move us.

“And when they [this congregation of workingmen] heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

They have put Paul down, and they are determined to vociferate her into sovereignty, and to see to it that her strength is not impaired by this preacher of a new gospel.

“And the whole city was filled with confusion.”

Now comes the inflammatory part of the narrative. We see how Demetrius could follow a pious bent. He carefully laid out his ground. He managed the affair with skill. He did not go out into the street and talk to anybody and everybody. He called together a select audience. He collected them on the principle of selfishness, which united them firmly and rendered them accessible to his appeal. And how he inflamed them! There were only a few of them; but they were associated, right and left, with the great mass of the common people, and when they were once thoroughly roused up, thoroughly zealous, thoroughly angry and thoroughly noisy, as for the rest of the community, they would have no trouble in getting them to join them.

“And having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.”

The theatre was a vast assembling place, uncovered, which would hold ten, fifteen or twenty thousand persons; and it was the favorite resort when the whole body of citizens attempted to come together.

Now we shall see Paul's courage:

“And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.”

He had no thought of his own safety. He had a consideration for the sensibilities of the people of this heathen city, as



we shall see in the sequel; but for his personal security he had no regard.

"And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre."

Now, we have an exhibition of popular confusion such as you may not have seen, but such as I have witnessed, though not in my own country:

"Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward [he evidently being the spokesman]. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people."

Here we have another trait manifested. Everybody has to have some chimney through which the smoke of his disposition passes off. Everybody has to have some vent through which he expends his power of hating. Of all the Christian graces, hating is the most facile, the most universal, the most copious and abundant. In the direction of despising and hating, under the name of opposition to evil and wrong and injustice, the power of man is immense; and generally men hate by the wholesale. They hate individually, of course; but there are certain symbols, which, under given circumstances, excite and bring out all the belluine nature of men in multitudes.

There was a time when you had only to say "Abolitionist" if you wished to stir up the people against a man. That settled the matter. Nobody would hear a man after that name had been applied to him. To suspect a man of being an abolitionist was at once to mark him and exclude him. If a man upon whom that suspicion rested attempted to make an apologetic or explanatory speech, men would cry him down.

We have in politics, oftentimes, excitements that run high, during which men are set apart and stigmatized under names of different sorts; and the moment you put an odious name on a man, that moment you open the flood-gates of prejudice against him. The pressure is always on; the power of hating never ceases; and all that is necessary in order to bring down the indignation of the community upon a man is to touch the valve by putting a name on him. Do that, and you immediately have the whole tide of basilar human nature flowing after him.

"But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

If he opened his mouth to speak, five hundred men threw into it, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." If he looked to the right or to the left, up came from the vast multitude, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." And so they *reasoned*

for two hours! The same thing has been done since, and is very likely to be done again.

"And when the town-clerk [I suppose that is as near to our idea as any term could be, though he was not exactly what a town-clerk with us is] had appeased the people [I should think that after two hours they would have been rather disposed to quiet down a little while, and take a rest], he said [and now we have a man of some common sense. There was no flummery in his mind at all. He talked as good sense as though he had been a born Christian, and a great deal better sense than some Christians talk]: Ye men of Ephesus [he conciliates their prejudices first], what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?"

This was a back-handed rebuke, although it was put in a complimentary form; and it is just as well to rebuke a man by a soft way as by a hard way. Instead of saying, as a modern radical might do, "You insensate beasts, what are you bellowing for? You deserve, the whole of you, to be thoroughly scourged, and sent out of the city. What nonsense is this noise you have been making for two hours, hallooing that Diana is a great goddess?"—instead of saying this, he said, "Why, my friends, the whole world recognizes the greatness of Diana of the Ephesians." This suggested to their minds at once that it was not necessary to screech and scream as they had been doing.

"Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly [intemperately, headlong]."

He feared that there would be a breaking out which would violate the law.

"For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches [temples; for then there were no churches in our sense of the term], nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him have a matter against any man, the law is open and there are deputies [lawyers]; let them implead one another."

There is good sense in that. It is as if he had said, "If Demetrius has any just cause of offence against Paul or these other disciples, the tribunals of his country are open, and I dare say there will be lawyers that will be willing to undertake his case for a consideration. You have brought hither men who have not committed public crimes, who have not robbed temples, who have not committed sacrilege; and the occasion of this disturbance is, that Demetrius says he has something against them. If he has, why doesn't he go to the proper place, and take the proper steps to bring them to justice, and not trouble the public with his private griefs?"

"But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters [there he deals very delicately with the subject of religion as between the heathen and the Christian], it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse."

It was a serious thing for the masses of the people, under a jealous government, where they were captive, as it were, to come together with such clamor. It looked very much like preparation for insurrection, or for absolute rebellion.

"And [they being sufficiently alarmed by this threat] when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly."

Then they all went home and felt better.

There are some points in this narrative that I think may perhaps be profitable to us, quite aside from the interest which we take in reviving a scene which took place far back in antiquity, in a great city—a scene which shows that human nature is precisely the same in all ages, that crowds act precisely the same in all ages, and that demagogues act precisely the same in all ages. Upon these points I shall dwell for a short time this evening.

In the first place, I wish you to take notice of the singular combination of the lower, sordid, selfish, mercenary, coarse man, and the patriotic and religious man, and the power that inhered in it, in the action of Demetrius.

No man acts from a single motive. We are so complex in our organization that it is impossible for any of us to have any volition, or pursue any course without there being in it or behind it several motives. In seeking the best things, men have collateral motives, besides the leading one. Thus, a religious man says, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"; but in self-examination he says, "Am I religious on account of the respectability of being so?" He cannot deny that that thought has passed through his mind. "Am I religious because religion opens the way for me to enter the church, and because being in the church facilitates my business, and increases the number of my customers?" He is obliged to acknowledge that that has occurred to him, not once nor twice, but many times. "Am I religious because with religion I shall, on the whole, have more personal enjoyment than I should have had without it?" He cannot but say that that idea has frequently suggested itself to him. A sensitive man may condemn himself because he finds that motives of a less worthy character are working with his highest motive in the direction of right things.

Now, we cannot act without having motives of more than one kind; and the question with every man, in considering his controlling motive, should be, not whether he has not collateral motives that are less worthy, but whether they are strengthening the main and central motive, that being the highest and noblest one. If Demetrius had really been a just man, and if he had really been solicitous about the welfare of



his city, and of the goddess whom he revered, then if he had thought also of the incidental disadvantages to his business which would result from the violation of the sanctity of the temple and of the statue, it would not have been wrong. The right or the wrong in such a matter depends very much upon which motive is the strongest and takes the lead. If he had come rushing in and had said, "The influence of this Paul upon the people will be ruinous: it is going to break up public order, and social order, and religious order; and besides all that, coming to think of it, it is going to work against your interest," it would not have been wrong. It would be right to strengthen a worthy motive by the use of a selfish one in that way—for selfishness cannot be better employed than in giving strength to a worthy motive that is not selfish. But it was the other way in the case of Demetrius. His chief motive, the one on which his conduct was founded, was selfish; and he whipped in religion to take a secondary place, and become the minion and servitor of selfishness. First he said to the craftsmen:

"Ye know that by this craft we have our wealth."

That shows what his feeling was. Then he said:

"Not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence be destroyed."

In order to fortify his first assertion, he suborned religion.

Now, we see this same thing going on throughout life everywhere. There is, for instance, a great deal of difference between opening a saloon in which art and beauty are developed for the sake of building up all the avenues of pleasure in a worthy way, and inviting people there, and having incidental, collateral instrumentalities for their amusement—there is a great deal of difference between doing that and opening a saloon in which the prime element is some carnal pleasure, some low delight, and then having pictures, decorations, all manner of garnishings, that shall draw men there. In the latter case the main thing is animal, bodily, degrading, even corrupting; and there is also beauty, but it is beauty that has been suborned to work the ends of the flesh. Yet if the primitive idea were beauty, and refinement, and enjoyment, through the imagination, through the affections, through the æsthetic senses, and there were also provision made for refreshment in right ways, and in subordination to the higher impulses, it would be perfectly proper that these lower incidental elements should be used.

We find the same fact illustrated in the movements of men throughout society—as, for example, in the politics of the State. There precisely the same tendencies go on. Men form a

policy and a party for the purpose of carrying out certain selfish ends. Then they clothe those ends with patriotic and moral appeals. Then it is that the clergy are invoked. Then it is that the co-operation of law-abiding citizens is sought for. But when you go down to the root of the matter you will find that the whole thing was concocted by a few selfish, corrupt, gross men, closeted in Albany; and that when they had laid their plan in the lowest impulses of humanity, they clothed it in the habiliments of religion to make it go. And the same thing takes place even in the larger sphere of national politics. But why should we count politics as being a sinner above all other things? Is it not precisely the same in churches, in denominations, and in the theological seminaries? Are there not men whose power is precious to them, whose reputations are dear to them, and who are acting according to their selfish instincts in order to maintain their standing? They have new ideas, advanced views, of the divine nature and government; but it would overthrow their professorship, or take away their priestly power, to promulgate those ideas and those views, and so they keep them to themselves. By their silence as to the increasing light which they receive, they allow mischief-makers, men of misleading theologies, men of unsound doctrines, men of dangerous tendencies, to occupy the field; and if you were to trace out their motive, you would find that the root of it was a feeling that the seminary must not suffer, or that their control must not be superseded in the denomination by any rising body of young men with progressive notions. There is a clutching on their part after their own interests, lest they may be undermined by the advancing tide of human development. For the sake of retaining their own position and that of the institutions or sects to which they belong, they hinder, if they do not defeat, all appeals to the highest religious faculties. I do not say that such is always the motive which actuates men in their opposition to the advancement of truth, but I have lived long enough to learn that oftentimes when men oppose the truth under the pretence of maintaining the soundness of their church or their denomination, they are impelled by ambition, by scheming selfishness, by sordid feelings.

We see it still more strongly portrayed when we are called to defend our children, our households, against corrupt influences; and where we set up the "banner of reform," as it is called. The great controversy that goes forward on the subject of temperance will at once occur to every one. I do not know that it is unnatural for those that vend intoxicating liquors to feel themselves to be unlawfully dealt with; but though it may not be unnatural, it is unjust. Whoever conducts affairs contrary to the law of the land is criminal. Whoever promotes any vice, whatever it may be, in a direction that is opposed to

the general public morality, is immoral. Whoever is a citizen in the State is bound to take care of the community. Whoever has a household is bound to protect that household. Whoever stands in the faith of the Christian religion is bound to see that the Christian religion is maintained. And there are faithful servants of God and of men who disinterestedly seek the best interests of God's kingdom and of their kind. But, oh! there are multitudes of men who are so encased in selfishness, and who are so beyond the reach of moral influences, that they seek their own worldly aggrandizement at the expense of the welfare and safety of the community, and the consequence is that the law must have its way with them, and no sooner are measures resorted to for the suppression of their wicked courses, than there is an outcry raised, as if the greatest inhumanity conceivable had been committed against them.

Now, I will not say anything on the subject of the great zeal which occasionally exists in reformers. We cannot pick and choose. We have to take mankind as it is. Some are more inflammable than others. There will be unkind words uttered. There will be words hastily spoken that should not be spoken at all. There will be intemperate language used. No doubt there is more or less of censurable conduct in those that seek to reform their fellow-men. Nevertheless, a movement that has for its object the diminution of poverty, the obliteration of crime, the salvation of men, the sanctity of the State, the integrity of the law, the best good of mankind—such a movement is not to be held to too rigid account because there is a little foam on the crest of the wave of reform which they are helping to roll on; but when a movement like that is put in operation, what an outcry we hear of an attempt being made to destroy men's liberties! How reformers are charged with attempting to institute fanaticism; with attempting to govern men by force, and not by reason; with attempting to invade the just rights of a limited class of their fellow-citizens! Thus, every movement for general reform is met by those who are maintaining themselves and gaining a livelihood by the furtherance of evil. Men who are catering to lust; men who seek profits from libidinous appetites; men who make their fortune by swindling, and stealing, and gambling; men who acquire an income by selling intoxicating drinks, in disobedience of the law—how such men, when they feel the pressure of law and public sentiment is brought to bear on them, cry out for liberty, for personal independence, for the rights of mankind! But it all means *pocket*. Demetrius, after he had said, "Boys, we get great gains for making shrines for Diana," went on to say, "Diana is going to be dishonored, and the State is going to come to shame in all the world, if this is permitted." And so men confederate in



council, and say, "Boys, we must make an appeal against fanaticism. That will tell. Rip it out. Roar it through the streets. 'Religious fanaticism! Sumptuary laws! Prescribing what men shall eat and drink! Taking away men's rights and liberties! Shutting men up!'"—that is the cry; but all the time the real meaning of it is pocket, *pocket*, POCKET.

So, then, we find that, after all, old Ephesus was not out of fashion. She knew how to do the devil's work in the garb of God. She knew how to make religion serve selfishness. She knew how to make morality serve the cause of avarice. And we have not improved. We are doing right over and over and over again what has been done in every age. The men that do wrong and live on wrong-doing are always willing to bring the motives of the highest kind of living to substantiate and co-operate with their baser and lower motives.

Another point that I wish to make is derived from Paul's conduct in this matter. I think there is no greater contrast in the world than that which exists between Paul and ordinary reformers who have lived since his time. He was a Jew. He had been brought up to belief that idolatry was the greatest of crimes. He was educated to perceive and feel sensitively that, quite aside from the theologic odium of idolatry, it was perpetually fermenting and fomenting all forms of lust, and led to licentiousness through an unbounded loosening of men's morals. Many gave to their chief goddess a name that really meant lust, and their worship of Venus and Bacchus and others was odious on account of their orgies and excesses. In general, heathen nations were so corrupt in morals that it was almost impossible for them to maintain national life. There was not stamina enough in them to insure cohesion and continuance. For want of moral sense they could not frame just governments and perpetuate them; and nations rose and fell on that account. No man understood these things better than the Apostle Paul; and yet you will not find that he used one single term of obloquy against idolatry. He preached in Athens; and no gentleman could be more courteous in another gentleman's room than he was there. Though he stood surrounded by goddesses in the Acropolis, under the shadow of Minerva, and saw everywhere crowds of worshipful deities before which men burned incense or bowed the knee, yet you will not find in one of his addresses a discourteous allusion to their idols. His speech on Mars hill is characterized by courtesy and kindness; and everywhere he went, in the conflicts which came up between him and the reigning religion, he was a gentleman. He respected other men's prejudices and convictions. He did not cast contempt on that which the people regarded as sacred, though he knew it to be without intrinsic sacredness. That he regarded these idols as false is cer-

tain; for, in reasoning on the subject of things that were offered in sacrifice to idols, he said, "We know that an idol is nothing." He knew that idols had no divinity in them; but he knew also that men believed them to be divine; and he did not do violence to their belief. For instance, in the case of this very image which was said to have fallen from heaven, he did not denounce it. The officer, the town-clerk, testified that the Apostles had done nothing rudely; that they had not injured the church; that they had not offended against the state; and he referred Demetrius and the craftsmen, if they had any charge to make against any man, to the law and to the courts.

He bore witness to the fact that the apostles had not excited the people; that they had not roused them up; that they had not derided their gods or goddesses, and that they had not spoken contemptuously of their religion. But here was this grotesque statue that was reputed to have come from Jupiter (who must have been glad to get rid of it); he saw it, and how easy it would have been for him to have pointed to that execrable thing and said to them, "Men of Ephesus, look at that monstrous fish-like, mummy-like object! Do you mean to tell me that you believe it to be God? Why, it is of the devil! It is unworthy of your notice. You ought to be ashamed to worship it. It is hideous and hateful. Kick it out of the temple. Burn it." He would have been burned instead of the image if he had said it; but he said no such thing. He made no assault upon them or their idols. And there is a reason in this which ought to be regarded. We ought to respect other people's convictions and notions, though they may be different from ours. When we sit in judgment on those idolaters, we ought to look leniently upon the woman who, with a devout nature, had been taught from childhood that the goddess had power over men and things. There were hundreds and thousands who had prayed to it, and worn an image of it about their necks; and when they escaped diseases or dangers which they besought it to deliver them from, they attributed their escape to it as naturally as we attribute to God our escape from evils when we pray to Him for protection against them. The deliverance might have come if we had not prayed; but we sincerely attribute it to Divine Providence. And do you not suppose that there were hundreds and thousands of people who thought there was really a divine providence which came out of that smoked, dried, hideous thing!

Great is the power of association. This is shown by a little thing that my mother painted, and that I possess. I am enough of a botanist to know that it does not look much like a flower; but my mother died when I was three years old:

my thought of her is idealized ; she is the consummate glory of womanhood in my thought ; and when I look upon that picture and think that she breathed on it, and that her eyes rested on it, it is inexpressibly dear to me. I would give all the world to once look into her eyes, and have her look into mine, or to feel the pressure of her hand for one moment. This cannot be ; but she looked upon that picture, she touched it, she gave it the form which it has, and money could not take it from me. I have thought of it for ten years, for twenty years, for thirty years, for forty years, and my thinking has at last painted it over again ; and now it is not a bit to me what it is in itself. It has become a memorial of my own mind's experience. I have poured my thoughts and affections upon it until at last it is a mirror in which I see my own love and reverence and yearning for something higher and better. To me it has my mother in it. That homely picture I have dressed and enriched, until at last it brings back to me those experiences which I have felt in connection with it. Such is the power that is given to the soul—the power of pouring out its own self on objects that of themselves have no tendency to call forth any affection whatever.

I go back to Litchfield, where I was a boy, and where I was brought up. I search out the old house that was my abiding place. It had no comeliness, but it was the home of my boyhood. It was there that my father was, and that my brothers and sisters were. I could not build a house that would be to me what that house was.

The pulpit from which my father preached was given to me ; I brought it here and gave it to the Historical Library of Brooklyn ; and I suppose it stands in that library yet. If it does, and you go and look at it, you will see on it the most extraordinary carving of grapes and tulips that your eyes ever beheld. But when I was a boy I would occasionally sit in the alleyway and look up at those green grapes and blue tulips, and I thought they were wonderfully beautiful, and I feasted my eyes on them ; and when I look at them now I do not see their hard forms or their ungainliness : I see them through the medium of my boyhood recollections, and they bring my youth and my early feelings back to me ; and I am not ashamed to confess that grapes and tulips carved to imitate grapes and tulips are not half so beautiful to my eyes as those, though they look as though they were cast in a mould of iron. It is that which I have brought to them and left in them that I see.

Now, take persons who have been taught that a little image carried in the bosom or worn on the neck is a charm, an amulet, a defense ; and let them believe that they have been by it protected, released from difficulties, lifted over obstacles ;



and no matter whether in reality it is a fact or not, it is a fact to them. Having been delivered, they attribute their deliverance to that image, and their gratitude goes out to it. They are mistaken as to the matter of cause and effect, but not as to the matter of their thanksgiving. And their experience becomes so associated with this image that you could not separate them from it without doing violence to their most sacred feelings. And if one were to seize it and throw it down with rudeness, and destroy it, he might as well aim a blow at their heart and smite that. To you the worship of this image seems like a miserable superstition, but to those who had surcharged it with their own experience it was not a superstition. After they had used it, after they prayed to it and trusted in it, it was a part of themselves, and they lived in it; and no man had a right to treat it with contempt or obloquy. This hideous statue that it was said fell from Jupiter we may now ridicule, because none of you ever associated anything sacred with it; but in the time of Paul it was different; and in his treatment of it he never forgot that he was a gentleman. He never opened his lips to utter one contemptuous word concerning that which he saw to be an idol, but which he knew to be sacred in the sight of those to whom he spoke. Around that statue how many grateful thoughts clustered! How many men and women poured out before it their most precious thoughts! There were no visible jewels upon it, but to their mind it was clothed with invisible jewels. They attributed to it deliverance and guidance; and though in itself it was a hideous thing, to them it was no longer hideous. To their eyes it had lost its homeliness. They saw in it that which it reflected to them of their experience.

So Paul respected—what? an idol? No, not an idol in and of itself, but the humanity that inhered in it. He knew that to those who worshiped it, it was not what it was to him.

And how is it with us? We are surrounded every day by persons who were brought up in a different land from our own, and under a different religion from our own. We are surrounded by those who have been educated, some as Universalists, others as Swedenborgians, others as Unitarians, others as strict Calvinists, others as ritualists in the Episcopal Church, and still others as extreme ritualists in the Roman Catholic Church, where the worship consists largely of genuflexions, kneeling before the altar, bowing at the name of Jesus, crossing one's self with "holy water," and in a multitude of ways expressing reverence by outward ceremonies. To the devout Catholic the symbols of his religion are sacred. They are not to him what we think when we analyze them in our intellectual moods. He has associated them with the best part of his life. And if they are to be touched, if they are to be disenchant-

it must be done with the utmost gentleness and sweetness. They must not be treated with rudeness. Never have you a right to violently assail that which is the foundation of the faith of anybody.

Theodore Parker, in preaching against the doctrine that Christ is necessary to the salvation of the world, and referring to the belief that He is the Lamb of God, and was offered as a sacrifice for the sin of the race, allowed himself to do so rude and cruel a thing as to say that orthodox people believed in a God who would not be appeased until he had smelt roast mutton. The substantial view on this subject in the orthodox church is, that Jesus Christ represents love in the form of sacrifice; and we have been taught to bear about His name as the choicest thing that is connected with our moral sentiment and personal affection; and we regard that Name as above every other name; and why should we be grievously wounded by such a contemptuous method of speaking of that which is sacred to us?

If I go into a Roman Catholic church, or into any church where men associate the uncovering of the head with reverence to God, I uncover my head. If, when the "host" is passing, I by not bending the knee shall hurt the religious feelings of those who look upon it, I will bend the knee, if not for my own sake, yet for their sake who regard it as sacred. If it would help any one, I should not hesitate to take the "holy water" and make the sign of the cross upon myself. I would not tear images or pictures from the rooms of servants who are brought up in the faith of the "holy Catholic Church." If I said anything to them I would say, "Your religion ought to make you better than you are. On account of that religion you ought to seek to fulfill your duties more conscientiously." I should help and not hinder them. I certainly should not injure them.

So we may learn a valuable lesson from the manner in which Paul dealt with this black-faced image which had enshrined itself in the hearts of the people of Ephesus. The same tolerance which he showed, we will do well to show where we are inclined to despise things which others reverence. It ill becomes us to treat with contempt anything that is precious in the eyes of our fellowmen. It is an important question how we are to deal with that which we do not believe in, in the presence of those who do most ardently believe in it. And here we have a solution of that question which is consistent with reason and with love—and love is the mother of the highest reason.

Let us consider this subject in its bearing upon our efforts to redeem the Sabbath from desecration. In seeking to secure a proper observance of this day, we are met by the whole tide of

Germanic influence that would destroy its sanctity; and there are two courses, either of which we may pursue: those persons of foreign birth who disregard the Sabbath we may call Sabbath-breakers, we may accuse them of being infidels, we may assail them violently as trying to pull down our institutions, or we may say to ourselves, These men are faithful to the convictions with which they were brought up; they are doing as they have been educated to do; and in the light of these considerations we may judge them and treat them leniently. The question is not whether we shall keep our institutions, but whether we shall not strive to understand the state of mind which leads some persons to disown obligations which we regard as binding upon us. They are not necessarily miscreants and mischief-makers because they do not conform to our habits of thought and action; and there is something for us to consider as well as for them. When I preach to men from abroad who have settled among us, I say, "You have come to a land where you may be superior to the people in the arts of music and painting, and in scholarship; but there is one thing in which we count ourselves to be your masters, and to be the masters of the world. We know how to organize liberty in such a way that it is wholesome and abides. We have learned how to secure liberty, and how to make it safe. In the practical work of governing a free people we acknowledge ourselves to be second to no other nation in this world. If we look about to see what are the means by which we have accomplished this, we find that religion, reverence for the Christian Sabbath, temperance, and all forms of self-restraint are among the most eminent of them."

These commonwealths we have opened to persons from abroad as a harbor and a refuge, and if they come here and undertake to undermine the foundations of our institutions, and to change our methods of procedure, we say to them, "We shall not, without the uttermost resistance, permit any one to take away from us the prerogative of deciding the question as to how commonwealths are to be founded. That is a trade that we were brought up to. We know what liberty means. We understand how it has been administrated in Europe. Nations there have sought it, and gained it, and lost it. They do not know how to so organize their governments that they shall remain. That lesson we have learned. We have established liberty, we have maintained it for a hundred years in the eyes of the world, and we cannot allow those who are not acquainted with this business to come and tamper with it. We will recognize their rights, and they must recognize ours. We will respect the way in which they have been educated, and they must respect the way in which we have been educated. It is as broad as it is long."



Take the subject of wine drinking. We have our own ideas on that subject, based upon our experience ; and we hold to those ideas ; but, on the other hand, we have no right to interfere with the personal liberty of any man in this matter. Public policy is one thing ; the right of a private man in his own household is quite another thing. If a man has been brought up in a society where wine-drinking is common and comparatively safe, we have no right to create a prejudice against him because he is addicted to drinking wine, or because he encourages wine-drinking. You will not gain anything in the long run by invading the right of private judgment, or the right of a man in his own individual sphere, to pursue such a course as he deems best.

Men who have been familiar from their childhood with the use of the simpler forms of beverage in their own country, are greatly shocked at the rude epithets which are put upon them here. I was struck when I saw that at the Christ Church Charity School in London, it was provided that a pint of beer should be given to each of the children at breakfast and at supper. The idea of founding a school where every child is to have, in the morning and at night, a pint of lager beer, or something stronger, would seem to us somewhat remarkable ; but consider that this took place hundreds of years ago ; consider that beer was the national drink ; consider that then the people had no idea but that it was a wholesome beverage ; consider that men who are brought up from their childhood with such impressions cannot look at the question of temperance as you and I look at it ; and consider that there is something to be thought of in respect to them on account of their foreign education and habits. It is perfectly lawful to reason with them ; but it is not lawful to make them odious because they adhere to customs which belonged to their own country and to their youthful experience in the household, and which have about them the memory of their father and mother. A course of policy which brings upon men promiscuous, indiscriminate blame is not wise.

We are, then, to maintain our own principle of sobriety, and our own belief in the unwisdom of men's indulging in intoxicating drinks on the ground that those that are in health do not need them ; but we are to bear in mind that others have had an education and a training so different from ours about these things that their associations are totally foreign to ours, and we are to pursue with them a method of calm reasoning clothed with kindness and benevolence. The temperance cause does not need zeal so much as it does broader wisdom and more charitableness between man and man. There is too much denunciation, too much odium, I had almost said too much vindictive exclusion. Let these things all pass away. Do not

cease to press the cause of temperance by every lawful instrumentality; restrain unlicensed dealers; seek to diminish the number of those that are licensed; aim at such restrictions that men shall not be permitted to manufacture the universal cause of crime any more than to directly manufacture crime itself.

But the realization of these reforms is for a later day. The principle is right, but its adoption will belong to a time when there shall be a better public sentiment and a higher education. I do not expect that we shall ever be done with this subject. You never can promote the cause of temperance in such a way as that you can get through with it. The trouble is that intemperance is founded in the strongest impulses of our nature; and the warfare of reason with the beast which is going on in every man is perpetual. The battle has to be fought over and over again. Therefore, let "Patient continuance in well doing" be your motto. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Be rigorous with yourself, but deal with those round about you in all charitableness, and faithfulness as well. Thus many will be saved, and the millennial day will be brought nearer and nearer. The cause of temperance is a cause for which you will ever have to labor. Christ said, "The poor you have always with you"; and you will always have drunkards with you. You will never have reformation so thoroughly organized or so completely accomplished as that you can abandon this work for something else. It has to be done in every generation. So long as you have to educate your children in reading, writing and arithmetic, so long you will have to teach men, little by little, to control the beast that is in them. This is a burden which is laid upon men, for which they are responsible, and for which they must not grow weary.

Ephesus is in ruins; the old temple, with its magnificence, has gone to decay; the image that excited such admiration or such disgust is no more to be found; the very thoughts and feelings which once prevailed in regard to these things are gone out of the hearts and minds of men; a total revolution has taken place; the most gorgeous thrones and the proudest monarchs are laid in the dust; but that detested Jew, who was ill-clad, who was a vagabond, who was hated by his own kind, who was driven out from his own city, who was a wanderer up and down in the earth, who stood solitary and alone, and whose very life was threatened by those to whom he came to bring knowledge, refinement, happiness and salvation, now stands higher than the gods themselves of antiquity. His name is known in all the earth. His power, that then seemed as nothing, now is everywhere felt. The first are the last, and the lowest and meanest is the first. Matter has succumbed, and moral power has gained. The earth has for ages seen this

change silently going on, and it is going on to-day ; yet not by might, nor by matter, nor by philosophy, but by moral influences which He set in motion, and on which time shall dash in vain, only fortifying that which it assaults.

NOTE.—We have given in this number of **THE COMPLETE PREACHER** sermons by Mr. Beecher and Mr. Spurgeon, that the reader may be able the more conveniently to compare the styles of sermonizing of these two remarkable preachers. Rev. J. C. Ryle, a very prominent clergyman of the Church of England, himself one of the ablest preachers and writers, not so well known in this country as his great ability merits, in a recent address before the Church Homiletical Society at St. Paul's, London, said to his clerical audience, "Do you ever read the sermons of Mr. Spurgeon? I am not a bit ashamed to say that I often do. I like to gather hints about preaching from all quarters. David did not ask about the sword of Goliath, Who made it? who polished it? what blacksmith forged it? . . . Mr. Spurgeon can preach most ably, and he proves it by keeping his enormous congregation together. *We ought always to examine and analyze sermons which draw people together.*" Mr. Spurgeon once said of Mr. Beecher, speaking of a collection of "One Thousand Gems" from Mr. Beecher's sermons: "Who else, among the sons of living men, besides Mr. Beecher, could furnish material for such a volume. He is, for versatility of genius and wealth of illustration, altogether peerless." The sermon of Mr. Beecher here published has been specially reported for us by T. J. Ellinwood, the official stenographer of Plymouth Church.—ED. **COMPLETE PREACHER.**



## How is Salvation Received?

### A SERMON

PREACHED BY C. H. Spurgeon, APRIL 1ST, 1877, IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, LONDON, ENGLAND.

*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace ; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed ; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham ; who is the father of us all.*—Romans iv : 16.

WE shall turn during yet another Sabbath morning to one of the great vital truths of the gospel. I feel it to be important more and more to bring forward the fundamental doctrines, since they are in certain quarters placed so much in the background. I met with a remark the other day that even the evangelical pulpit needs to be evangelized. I am afraid it is too true, and therefore we will give such prominence to the gospel, and to its central doctrine of justification by faith, that no such remark shall be applicable to us. We have heard it said that if an instrument cou'd be invented which would serve the same purpose toward sermons as the lactometer does toward milk, you would with great difficulty be able to discover any trace of the unadulterated milk of the Word in large numbers of modern discourses. I shall not subscribe to any sweeping censure, but I am afraid there is too much ground for the accusation. In abundance of sermons the polish of the rhetoric is greatly in excess of the weight of the doctrine, and "the wisdom of words" is far more conspicuous than the cross of Christ.

Besides, the gospel is always wanted. There are always some persons who urgently need it, and will perish unless they receive it. It is a matter of hourly necessity. There may be finer and more artistic things to speak about than the simplicities of Christ, but there are certainly no more useful and requisite things. The sign-posts at the cross roads bear very simple words, generally consisting of the names of the towns and villages to which the roads lead ; but if these were painted out and their places supplied with stanzas from Byron, or stately lines from Milton, or deep thoughts from Cowper or Young, I am afraid there would be grievous complaints from persons losing their way. They would declare that, however excellent the poetry might be, they thought it an impertinence to mock them with a verse when they needed plain directions as to the king's highway. So let those who will indulge in poetical thoughts and express them in high-flown language ; it shall be ours to set up the hand-posts marking out the way of salvation, and to keep them painted in letters large and plain, so that he who runs may read.

There is another reason for giving the gospel over and over, again and again. It is the reason which makes the mother tell her child twenty times, namely, because nineteen times are not enough. Men are so forgetful about the things of Christ, and their minds are so apt to start aside from the truth, that when they have learned the gospel they are very easily bewitched by falsehood, and are readily deceived by that "other gospel" which is not another; therefore we need to give them "line upon line and precept upon precept." I scarcely remember the old rustic rhyme, but I recollect hearing it sung in my boyish days when the country people were dibbling beans, and according to the old plan were putting three into each hole. I think it ran thus:

"One for the worm and one for the crow,  
And let us hope the other will grow."

We must be content to plant many seeds in the hope that one will take root and bear fruit. The worm and crow are always at work, and will be sure to get their full share of our sowing, and therefore let us sow the more.

Come we, then, to our text and to the gospel of faith. Last Sabbath the theme was, *For whom is the gospel meant?* and the reply was, *For sinners.* The question to-day is, *How is the gospel received?* The answer is, *By faith.*

Our first head shall be, *the fact*—"it is of faith"; secondly, *the first reason for this*—"that it might be by grace"; and thirdly, *the further reason*—"to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed."

I. First, then, here is THE FACT, *it is of faith.* What does the "it" refer to? *It is of faith.* If you will read the context, I think you will consider that it refers to the promise, although some have said that the antecedent word or thought is "the inheritance." This matters very little, if at all; it may mean the inheritance, the covenant, or the promise, for these are one. To give a wide word which will take in all—the blessedness which comes to a man in Christ, the blessedness promised by the covenant of grace is of faith: in one word, salvation is of faith.

And what is faith? It is believing the promise of God, taking God at His word, and acting upon that belief by trusting in Him. Some of the Puritans used to divide faith, improperly, but still instructively, into three parts. The first was self-renunciation, which is, perhaps, rather a preparation for faith than faith itself, in which a man confesses that he cannot trust in himself, and so goes out of self and all confidence in his own good works. The second part of faith they said was reliance, in which a man, believing the promise of God, trusts Him, depends upon Him, and leaves his soul in the

Saviour's hands; and then the third part of faith they said was appropriation, by which a man takes to himself that which God presents in the promise to the believer, appropriates it as his own, feeds upon it, and enjoys it. Certainly there is no true faith without self-renunciation, reliance, and at least a measure of appropriation; where these three are found, there is faith in the soul. We shall, however, better understand what faith is as we proceed with our subject, if God the Holy Ghost will be pleased to enlighten us. Dear friends, you can easily see that the blessing was of faith in Abraham's case, and it is precisely the same with all those who by faith are the children of believing Abraham.

First, *it was so in the case of Abraham.* Abraham obtained the promise by faith, and not by works nor by the energy of the flesh. He relied alone upon the Divine promise. We read in the seventeenth verse: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Abraham's faith consisted in *believing the promise* of God, and this he did firmly and practically. He was far away in Chaldea when the Lord called him out and promised to give him a land and a seed, and straightway he went forth, not knowing whither he went. When he came into Canaan he had no settled resting-place, but wandered about in tents, still believing most fully that the land wherein he sojourned as a stranger was his own. God promised to give him a seed, and yet he had no children. Year followed year, and in the course of nature he grew old and his wife was long past the age of childbearing, and yet there was no son born to them. When at last Ishmael was born, his hope in that direction was dashed to the ground, for he was informed that the covenant was not with Ishmael. Believing, Abraham had stepped aside to carnal expediency, and had hoped in that way to realize the lingering promise, but he had fourteen years more to wait, till he was a hundred years old, and till Sarah had reached her ninetieth year. Yet he believed the word of the Lord, and fell upon his face and laughed with holy joy, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old?" So, too, when Isaac was born and grown up, he believed that in Isaac should the covenant be established, nor did he doubt this when the Lord bade him take Isaac and offer him up as a sacrifice. He obeyed without questioning, believing that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, or in some way to keep his word of promise. Now, consider that we have multiplied promises, and those written down in black and white in the inspired Word, which we may consult at any time we please, while Abraham had only now and then a verbal promise, and yet he



clung to it and relied upon it. Though there was nothing else to rely upon, and neither sign nor evidence of any offspring to fulfill the promise that he should be heir of the world and father of many nations, yet he needed no other ground of confidence but that God had said it, and that he would make his word good.

There was in Abraham, also, *an eye to the central point of the promise*, the Messiah, Jesus, our Lord. I do not know that Abraham understood all the spiritual meaning of the covenant made with him, probably he did not; but he did understand that the Christ was to be born of him, in whom all nations should be blessed. When the Lord said that He would make him a blessing, and in him should all nations of the earth be blessed, I do not suppose Abraham saw all the fulness of that marvelous word; but he did see that he was to be the progenitor of the Messiah. Our Lord himself is my authority for this assertion: "Abraham saw my day, he saw it and was glad." Though there appeared to this man, old and withered, with a wife ninety years of age, no likelihood that he should ever become a father, yet he did fully believe that he would be the father of many nations, and that upon no ground whatever but that the living God had so promised him, and therefore so it must be.

This faith of Abraham we find *considered no difficulties whatever*. "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Brethren, these were in themselves terrible difficulties, enough to make a man fear that the promise did but mock him, but Abraham did not consider anything beyond the promise and the God who gave it. The difficulties were for God to consider, and not for him. He knew that God had made the world out of nothing, and that He supported all things by the word of His power, and therefore he felt that nothing was too hard for Him. His own advanced years and the age of his wife were of no consequence, he did not even take them into the reckoning, but saw only a faithful Almighty God, and felt content. O noble faith! Faith such as God deserves! Faith such as none render to Him but those whom He calls by effectual grace! This it was which justified Abraham, and made him the father of believers.

Abraham's faith also *gave glory to God*. I stopped in the middle of the twentieth verse just now, but we must now complete the reading of it—"But was strong in faith, giving glory to God." God had promised, and he treated the Lord's prom-

ise with becoming reverence; he did not impiously suspect the Lord of falsehood, or of mocking His servant, or of uttering to-day what He might take back to-morrow. He knew that Jehovah is not a man that He should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent. Abraham glorified the truth of God, and at the same time he glorified His power. He was quite certain that the Lord had not spoken beyond His line, but that what He had promised He was able to perform. It belongs to puny man to speak more than he can do; full often his tongue is longer than his arm; but with the Lord it is never so. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Abraham adoringly believed in the immutability, truth and power of the living God, and looked for the fulfilment of His word.

All this strong, unstaggering faith which glorified God *rested upon the Lord alone*. You will see that it was so by reading the twenty-first verse. "Being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." There was nothing whatever in his house, his wife, himself, or anywhere else which could guarantee the fulfilment of the promise. He had only God to look to: only, did I say—what could a man have more? Yet so it was, there were no signs, marks, tokens, or indications to substantiate the confidence of Abraham: he rested solely upon the unlimited power of God. And this, dear brethren, is the kind of faith which God loves and honors, which wants no signs, marks, evidences, helps, or other buttresses to support the plain and sure word of the Lord; but simply knows that Jehovah has said it, and that He will make it good. Though all things should give the promise the lie, we believe in it because we believe in God. True faith ridicules impossibility, and pours contempt upon improbability, knowing that omnipotence and immutability cannot be thwarted or hindered. Has God said it? Then so it is. Dictum! Factum! Spoken! Done! These twain are one with the Most High.

Well, now, *the faith of every man who is saved must be of this character*. Every man who receives salvation receives it by a faith like that of Abraham, for, my brethren, when we are saved, *we too take the promise of God and depend upon it*. To one believer one word of God is applied, to another another, but some sweet word, most sure and steadfast, is discovered upon which we fix our hope, and find anchorage for our spirit. Yea, and as we search the word by faith we take each promise as we find it, and we say "this is true" and "this is true," and so we rest upon all of them. Is it not so with all of you who have peace with God? Did you not gain it by resting upon the promise of God as you found it in the word and as it was opened up to you by the Holy Spirit? Have you any other ground

of confidence but God's promise? I know you have not, my brethren, nor do you desire any.

And *we also believe in God over the head of great difficulties.* If it was hard for Abraham to believe that a son should be born unto him, methinks it is harder for a poor burdened sinner, conscious of his great guilt, conscious that God must punish him also for that guilt, to believe nevertheless in the hopeful things which the gospel prophesies unto him. Can I believe that the righteous God is looking upon me, a sinner, with eyes of love? Can I believe that though I have offended Him and broken all His laws He nevertheless waits to be gracious to me? While my heart is heavy and the prospect is black around me, and I see nothing but a terrible hell to be my eternal portion, can I at such a time believe that God has planned my redemption and given His Son to die for me, and that now He invites me to come and receive a full, perfect and immediate pardon at His hands? Can the gospel message be true to such a worthless rebel as I am? It seems as if the law and justice of God set themselves against the truth of such wonderful deeds of mercy as the gospel announces, and it is hard for a stricken heart to believe such a report; but the faith which saves the soul believes the gospel promise in the teeth of all its alarms, and notwithstanding all the thunders of the law. Despite the trepidation of the awakened spirit, the Holy Spirit enables it to accept the great Father's word, to rest upon the propitiation which He has set forth, and to quiet itself with the firm persuasion that God for Christ's sake doth put away its sin.

At the same time another grand miracle is to be believed in, namely, regeneration. This seems to me to be quite as great an act of faith as for Abraham to believe in the birth of a child by two parents who were both advanced in years. The case stands thus: here am I, dead by nature, dead in trespasses and sins. The deadness of Abraham and Sarah, according to nature, was not greater than the deadness of my soul to every good thing. Is it possible, then, that I should live unto God, that within this stony heart there should yet throb eternal life and divine love, and that I should come to delight in God? Can it be that with such a depraved and deceitful heart as mine I should yet rise to fellowship with the holy God, and should call Him my Father, and feel the spirit of adoption within my heart? Can I, who now dread the Lord, yet come to rejoice in him? "Oh," says the poor troubled sinner, "can I that have fought against the throne of God, I that even tried to doubt His existence, ever come to be at perfect peace with Him, so that He shall call me His friend and reveal His secret to me and listen to my voice in prayer? Is it possible? The faith which saves the soul believes in the possibility of regeneration and



sanctification—nay, more, it believes in Jesus, and obtains for us power to become children of God and strength to conquer sin. This is believing God indeed.

Look this way yet again, for here is another difficulty. We know that we must persevere to the end, for only he that endureth to the end shall be saved. Does it not seem incredible that such feeble, fickle, foolish creatures as we are should continue in faith and the fear of God all our lives? Yet this we must do; and the faith which saves enables us to believe that we shall persevere, for it is persuaded that the Redeemer is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him, that He will perfect that which concerneth us, that He will suffer none to pluck us out of His hand, and that having begun the good work in us He will carry it on. This is faith worthy of the father of the faithful.

Once again, let us behold another difficulty for faith. We believe, according to God's promise, that we shall one day be "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." I do believe that this head shall wear a crown of glory, and that this hand shall wave a palm branch. I am fully assured that He will one day sweetly say to me—

"Close thine eyes that thou may'st see  
What I have in store for thee.  
Lay thine arms of warfare down,  
Fall that thou may'st win a crown."

We, all, who are believers in Jesus, shall one day be without fault before the throne of God; but how is this to be? Surely our confidence is that He who has promised it is able to perform it. This is the faith which finds its way to glory—the faith which expects to enter into the Redeemer's joy, because of the Redeemer's love and life. Brethren, in this matter we see the difficulties, but we do not consider them; we count them as less than nothing since Omnipotence has come into the field. "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We know that our Redeemer liveth, and that because He lives we shall also live, and be with Him where He is.

At the end of the chapter we are told that *this saving faith rests in the power of God as manifested in Jesus*—"If we believe in Him who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Beloved, we believe that Jesus died, as certainly died as ever man died, and yet on the morning of the third day He rose again from the dead by Divine power. It is not to us a thing incredible that God should raise the dead; we therefore believe that because God has raised the dead He hath raised us also from our death in sin, and that He will raise our bodies from the tomb after they shall have slept awhile in the earth. We believe also that our Lord Jesus died for our of

fences, and put them away. Our faith builds upon the substitution of the Lord Jesus on our behalf, and it rests there with firm confidence. We believe also that He rose again because His substitution was accepted, and because our offences were forever put away—rose again to prove that we are justified in Him. This is where we stand, then. I expect to be saved, not at all because of what I am, nor of what I can do, nor because of anything I ever shall be able to be or to do; but only because God has promised to save those who believe in Jesus Christ through what the Lord Jesus has suffered in their stead. Because Jesus has risen to prove that His suffering was accepted on the behalf of believers, there do we rest and trust, and that is the way in which every believer is saved—that way and no how else. Even as Abraham believed so do we. Here is the fact, it is of faith.

II. Now we come to the second point; and here we are to consider THE FIRST REASON why God has chosen to make salvation by faith, "*that it might be of grace.*"

Now, dear friends, the Lord might have willed to make the condition of salvation a mitigated form of works. If He had done so it would not have been of grace, for it is a principle which I need not explain now, but a fixed principle, that if the blessing be of grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work. As oil and water will not mix, and as fire and water will not lie down side by side in quiet, so neither will the principle of merit and the principle of free favor. You cannot make a legal work to be a condition of a gracious blessing without at once introducing an alien element and really bringing the soul under the covenant of works, and so spoiling the whole plan of mercy. Grace and faith are congruous, and will draw together in the same chariot, but grace and merit are contrary the one to the other and pull opposite ways, and therefore God has not chosen to yoke them together. He will not build with incongruous materials, or daub with untempered mortar. He will not make an image partly of gold and partly of clay, nor weave a linsey-woolsey garment; His work is all of a piece and all of grace.

Again, in Abraham's case, inasmuch as he received by faith the blessing which God promised him, *it is very evident that it was of grace.* You never heard any one ascribe Abraham's salvation to his merits, and yet Abraham was an eminently holy man. There are specks in his life—and in whose life will there not be found infirmities?—but yet he was one of the grandest characters of history. Still, no man thinks of Abraham as a self-justifying person, or as at all related to the Pharisee who said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." I never heard anybody hint that the great patriarch

had whereof to glory before God. His name is not "the father of the innocent," but "the father of the faithful." When we read Abraham's life we see that God called him by an act of sovereign grace, that God made a covenant with him as an act of grace, and that the promised child was born, not of the power of the flesh, but entirely according to promise. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life in the life of the patriarch, and it is illustrated in a thousand ways whenever we see his faith receiving the promises. The holiness of Abraham, since it arose out of faith, never leads us to ascribe his blessedness to anything but the grace of God.

Now, inasmuch as we are saved by faith, *every believer is made to see for himself that, in his own instance, it is by grace.* Believing is such a self-renunciating act that no man who looks for eternal life thereby ever talked about his own merits, except to count them but dross and dung. No, brethren, the child of the promise cannot live in the same house with the son of the bondwoman: when Isaac grows up, Ishmael must depart: the principle of believing unto everlasting life will not endure a hint about human deservings. Those who believe in justification by faith are the only persons who can believe in salvation by grace. The believer may grow in grace till he becomes fully assured of his own salvation; yes, and he may become holiness unto the Lord in a very remarkable manner, being wholly consecrated to God in body, soul and spirit; but you will never hear the believing man speak of his experience, or attainments, or achievements as a reason for glorying in himself, or as an argument for becoming more confident as to his safety. He dares not trust his works, or states of feeling, for he feels that by faith he stands. He cannot get away from simple faith, for the moment he attempts to do so he feels the ground going from under him, and he begins to sink into horrible confusion of spirit; therefore he returns unto his rest, and resolves to abide in faith in his risen Saviour, for there he abides in the grace of God.

Through the prominence given to faith, the truth of salvation by grace is so conspicuously revealed that *even the outside world are compelled to see it*, though the only result may be to make them cavil thereat. They charge us with preaching too much concerning grace, because they hear us magnifying and extolling the plan of salvation by faith, and they readily perceive that a gift promised to faith must be a boon of grace, and not a reward for service done. Only begin to preach salvation by works or ceremonies, and nobody will accuse you of saying too much of grace; but keep to faith, and you are sure to keep to the preaching of grace.

Moreover, *faith never did clash with grace yet.* When the sinner comes and trusts to Christ, and Christ saith to him, "I



forgive thee freely by my grace," faith says, "O Lord, that is what I want, and what I believe in; I ask thee to deal with me even so." "But if I give thee everlasting life it will not be because thou deservest it, but for mine own name's sake." Faith replies, "O Lord, that is also precisely as I desire; it is the sum and substance of my prayer." When faith grows strong and takes to pleading in prayer (and oh how mighty she is with God in supplication! moving His omnipotence to her mind), yet all her pleadings are based on grace, and none of them upon the merit of the creature. Never yet did faith borrow weapons from Mount Sinai, never once did she ask as though the favor were a debt, but she always holds to the promise of the gracious God, and expects all things from the faithfulness of her God.

Ay, and when faith grows strongest and attains to her high stature, and is fullest of delight, so that she danceth for very joy, yet she never in all her exultation boasts or exalts herself. Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By the law of works? nay, but by the law of faith. Faith and carnal boasting never yet walked together. If a man should boast of the strength of his faith, it would be clear evidence that he had none at all, or at least that he had for the time fallen into vain-glorious presumption. Boasting? No, faith loves to lie low, and behave herself as a little child, and when she lifts herself up it is to exalt her Lord, and her Lord alone.

Faith, too, is well calculated to show forth the grace of God, because *faith is the child of grace*. "Ah," says faith, "I have grasped the covenant, I have laid hold on the promises, I have seen Christ, I have gazed into heaven, I have enjoyed foretastes of eternal joys. But (says she) I am of the operation of God; I should never have existed if the Spirit of God had not created me." The believer knows that his faith is not a weed indigenous to the soil of his heart, but a rare plant, an exotic which has been planted there by Divine wisdom, and he knows, too, that if the Lord does not nourish it, his faith will die like a withered flower. He knows that his faith is a perpetual miracle; for it is begotten, sustained, and preserved by a power not less mighty than that which raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. If I met with an angel in a hovel, I should know that he was not born there, but that he came from above; and so it is with faith, its heavenly descent is manifest to all. Faith, then, tracing her very existence to grace, never can be anything but the friend, the vindicator, the advocate and the glorifier of the grace of God; therefore, it is of faith that it might be by grace.

III. Now, thirdly, there is A FURTHER REASON for faith and grace being the Lord's chosen method of salvation—"To the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed." Look

at this, dear friends, very carefully. Salvation was made to be of faith, and not of works, that the promise might be sure to all the seed, for first, *it could not have been sure to us Gentiles by the law*, because in a certain sense we were not under the law of Moses at all. Turn to the text and you find that it runs thus: "Sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." That is to say, the Jew receiving the seal of circumcision and coming under the ceremonial law, eating its passover, and presenting its sacrifices, might possibly have been reached by a legal method, but we who are Gentiles would have been altogether shut out. As to the covenant according to the flesh, we are aliens, and have never come under its bonds or participated in its privileges; therefore, grace chooses to bless us by faith in order that the Gentile may partake of the blessing of the covenant as well as the Jew.

But there is a still wider reason: it is of faith, because *the other method has failed already in every case*. We have all broken the law already, and so have put ourselves beyond the power of ever receiving blessing as a reward of merit. Failure at the outset has ruined our future prospects, and henceforth by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. What remaineth, then, if we are to be saved at all, but that it should be of faith? This door alone is open; let us bless God that no man can shut it.

Again, it is of faith that it *might be sure*. Now, under the system of works, nothing is sure. Suppose, my dear brethren, you were under a covenant of salvation by works, and you had fulfilled those works up till now, yet you would not be sure. Are you seventy years of age, and have you kept your standing till now? Well, you have done a great deal more than father Adam did, for though he was a perfect man without any natural corruption, I do not suppose that he kept his first estate for a day. But after all you have done for these long years you may lose everything before you have finished your next meal. If your standing depends upon your own works you are not safe, and can never be safe till you are out of this present life, for you might sin, and that one offence against the conditions would destroy the covenant. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby." But see the excellence of salvation by grace, for when you reach the ground of faith in the promises you are upon *terra firma*, and your soul is no longer in jeopardy. Here is a sure foundation, for the divine promise cannot fail. If my salvation depends upon the Lord, and is received by me on the ground that the Lord hath decreed it, promised it in



covenant, and ensured it to me by the blood of Jesus Christ, then it is so mine that neither life nor death nor Satan nor the world shall ever rob me of it. If I live to the age of Methuselah my faith will have the same promises to rest upon, and clinging there she will defy the lapse of years to change her immutable security. The promise would not be sure to one of the seed by any other means than that of grace through faith, but now it is sure to all.

Moreover, if the promise had been made to works, there are some of the seed to whom most evidently it never could come. One of the seed of Abraham hung dying upon a cross, and within an hour or two his bones were broken that he might the more quickly die and be buried. Now, if salvation to that poor dying thief must come by works, how can he be saved? His hands and feet are fastened up, and he is in the very article of death: what can he do? The promise would not have been sure *to him*, my brethren, if there had been any active condition; but he believed, cast a saving eye upon the Lord Jesus, and said, "Lord, remember me," and the promise was most sure to him, for the answer was—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Many a chosen one of God is brought into such a condition that nothing is possible to him except faith, but grace has made the act of believing divinely possible. Well was it for those bitten by serpents that all that was asked of them was a look, for this was possible even when the hot venom made the blood to boil, and scalded all the frame with fever. Faith is possible to the blind, the lame, the deaf, the dumb; faith is possible to the almost idiot, the desponding and the guilty; faith can be possessed by babes and by the extremely aged, by the illiterate as well as by the instructed; it is well chosen as the cup to convey the living water, for it is not too heavy for the weak, nor too huge for the little, nor too small for the full-grown.

Now, brothers and sisters, I have done when I have said just this. I will ask you, who have believed in Christ, one question—you who are resting in the promise of God, you who are depending upon the finished work of Him who was delivered for your offences—how do you feel? Are you rejoicing in your unquestionable safety? As I have turned this matter over and thought upon it, my soul has dwelt in perfect peace. I cannot conceive anything that God himself could give to the believer which would make him more safe than the work of Christ has made him. God cannot lie; are you not sure of this? He must keep His promise; are you not certain of this? What more do you want? As a little child believes its father's word without any question, even so would we rest on the bare, naked promise of Jehovah, and in so doing we become conscious of a peace that passeth all un-



derstanding, which keeps your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. I dare not say otherwise, nor be silent, for I am conscious of being able to say, "Therefore, being justified by faith, I have peace with God." In that peace of the soul much love springs up, and inward unity to God and conformity to Christ. Faith believes her God and trusts Him for time and eternity for little things and great things, for body and for soul, and this leads on to still higher results. O blessed God, what a union of desire and heart and aim exists between thee and the soul that trusts thee! How are we brought into harmony with thy mind and purposes! How is our heart made to delight in thee! How completely is our soul "bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God!" We grow up into Him in all things who is our Head, our life, our all.

I charge you, dear children of God, "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Live in His peace, and abound in it more and more; do not be afraid of being too peaceful, "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." When you have to condemn yourself for shortcomings, yet do not question the promise of the Lord. When sin overcomes you, confess the fault, but do not doubt the pardon which Jesus still gives you. When sharp temptations and severe trials arise from divers quarters, do not suffer them to carry you by storm; let not the stronghold and castle of your spirit be captured—"let not your heart be troubled." Stagger not at the promise through unbelief, but hold to it whether you walk in the sunshine or in Egyptian darkness. That which the Lord has promised He is able also to perform; do not doubt it. Lean hard on the faithful promise, and when you feel sad at heart lean harder and harder still, for "faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it."

Last of all, you sinners here this morning, who have heard all about this salvation by trusting, I charge you do not rest till you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ and rested in the great promises of God. Here is one: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever." Here is another which is very cheering: "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Call upon Him in prayer, and then say, "Lord, I have called, and Thou hast said I shall be saved." Here is another gracious word: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Attend thou to these two commands, and then say, "Lord, I have Thy word for it that I shall be saved, and I hold Thee to it." Believe God, sinner. Oh that He would give thee grace this morning by His Holy Spirit to say, "How can I do otherwise than believe Him? I dare not doubt Him. Oh poor tried soul, believe in Jesus so as to trust thy guilty soul with Him. The more guilty thou feelest thyself to be,

the more is it in thy power to glorify God, by believing that He can forgive and renew such a guilty one as thou art. If thou liest buried like a fossil in the lowest stratum of sin, yet He can quarry for thee and fetch thee up out of the horrible pit, and make thy dry, petrified heart to live. Believest thou this? "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Trust the promise that He makes to every believer that He will save him, and hold thou to it, for it is not a vain thing, it is thy life. "But what if I obtain no joy or peace?" Believe the promise still, and joy and peace will come. "But what if I see no signs?" Ask for no signs; be willing to trust God's word without any other guarantee but His truthful character, and thou wilt thus give Him glory. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Believe that Jehovah cannot lie, and as He has promised to forgive all who believe in Jesus, hang on to that word and thou shalt be saved. Sinners, I have set before you the way of salvation as simply as I can; will you have it or not? May the Spirit of God sweetly lead you to say, "Have it, ay, that I will." Then go in peace, and rejoice henceforth and forever. God bless you. Amen.